Gregory of Nazianzus
Images and Reflections

Edited by
Jostein Børtnes & Tomas Hägg

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Bergen, April 2005

Jostein Børtnes Tomas Hägg

I

Introduction: Prompting for meaning in Gregory's rhetoric

Jostein Børtnes

The Cappadocian Fathers – Basil the Great, his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend, Gregory of Nazianzus – were born around 330. Gregory of Nazianzus was the oldest of the three, Gregory of Nyssa the youngest. They grew up in an environment in which Christianity was no longer a forbidden faith. The Edict of Milan, which had followed the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in 312, had already granted freedom of worship to the Christians. In 325 the emperor had convoked the first ecumenical council of the Church at Nicaea, where the participants had decreed the full deity of the second person of the Trinity, the *homoousia* or "consubstantiality" of the Son with the Father, anathematizing such statements as "the Son was created", and "there was a time when he was not", ascribed to the Alexandrian priest Arius and his followers.

In spite of the apparent victory of the Orthodox faction at Nicaea, the doctrinal struggles continued. In the 340s, the Neo-Arian Aetius won the support of Constantius, and from 353 onwards, when Constantius became sole emperor, the Neo-Arians seemed to gain the upper hand. The most radical Neo-Arian party, the so-called Anomoians, led by Aetius and his disciple Eunomius, claimed that the Son is *anomoios* or "unlike" the Father. Basil of Ancyra and Eustathius of Sebaste took a less extreme stance, maintaining that the Son was *homoios* or "like" the Father, a definition that came close to the Orthodox doctrine of *homoousia*, i.e. "of *same* substance" as the Father.[1] It was this more moderate, *homoian* version of Neo-Arianism that prevailed under both Constantius and Valens. But the struggle between the two parties raged back and forth until the death of Valens in 378 and the enthronement of the Orthodox Theodosius as ruler of the eastern parts of the empire the following year. With these events, Arianism finally collapsed.

[1] Rousseau 1994: *Basil of Caesarea*, 93-132, in particular 95-99.

The Cappadocians developed their trinitarian theology in opposition to the doctrines of both the Anomoians and the Homoians, basing their own creed on the Orthodox Nicene doctrine of *homoousia*, the "consubstantiality" of the Son with the Father. In their writings they defended their belief in the unknowability of God as the first principle, in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as the three persons or *hypostases* of the one godhead, in the Son as the eikon of the Father, and in *theosis*, the possibility of every Christian being assimilated with God in imitation of the incarnate Son as the divine model and archetype.

In his *Christianity and Classical Culture*, Jaroslav Pelikan asserts that

> Careful study, including the study that has led up to this book, has confirmed the impression of "a striking similarity among the Cappadocians" in thought and even in language, a similarity that reflects but goes beyond their having shared a common background and social class (whether this be the "country aristocracy", the "Roman senatorial class", or the "Cappadocian curial class").[2]

Pelikan's insistence on a striking similarity among the Cappadocians is reinforced by a reference to Frederick Norris' study of Gregory. Norris, however, is more careful in his characterization. In some instances, he suggests, the Cappadocians perhaps "divided up topics and shared the results". This strategy "allowed them to go on to further stages of discussion and not cover exactly the same ground".[3] Other scholars have been less concerned with their similarities and have accentuated instead their differences. Johannes Quasten, for instance, distinguishes between Basil as "the man of action", Gregory of Nazianzus as "the master of oratory", and Gregory of Nyssa as "the thinker."[4] This distinction is particularly appropriate in the present context, since the orations and poetry of the Theologian are the main subject of our book.

Norris characterizes Gregory as a "philosophical rhetorician" who through his paideia "grasped fundamental truths about both the content and the method of Christian theology". He was not, however, "the powerful metaphysician whom one discovers in reading the attacks of Nyssa and Marius Victorinus on later Arians":

> He may, however, have chosen not to be. His rhetorical theology does avoid the dangers of systematic foundationalist programs better than theirs, while it demonstrates his command of logic and grammar. His lackluster reputation in some modern circles has probably been influenced by the twentieth-century misunderstandings of the Aristotelian heritage and the contemporary penchant for the philosophical justification of theological programs rather than Nazianzen's own lack of skill. Historically, both worshiping Christians and students of culture have praised his efforts.[5]

The constructive revaluation of Gregory's "rhetorical theology" proposed by Norris, coincided with the emergence of a modern rhetoric and the revival of classical rhetoric in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. This reappraisal is particularly evident in the studies of Mark Turner.[6] Turner developed his cognitive rhetoric on the basis of the theories of metaphor that were being put forward in contemporary linguistics and the cognitive sciences by researchers such as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.[7] This research, he observes, "has demonstrated that metaphor is not merely a matter of *words* but is rather a fundamental mode of *cognition* affecting human thought and action, including everyday language and poetic language".[8] Likewise, classical rhetoric, before it abandoned thought for stylistic concerns, reducing itself to cataloguing what it took to be kinds of surface wordplay, "sought to discover what knowledge and thought members of an audience brought to communication":

> How could a speaker, through language, move his audience from one locus of thought to another? What were the *commonplaces* of knowledge? What were the connections between *thought* and *language*, and how could one work those connections to evoke, invent, and persuade.[9]

[2] Pelikan 1991: *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism*, 5.

[3] Norris 1991: *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*, 185.

[4] Quasten 1960: *Patrology*, Vol. III, 204, 236, 254, cf. Pelikan 1991, 5.

[5] Norris 1991, 38-9.

[6] See in particular Turner 1987: *Death is the Mother of Beauty: Mind, Metaphor, Criticism*; Turner 1991: *Reading Minds: The Study of English in the Age of Cognitive Science*; and Turner 1996: *The Literary Mind: The Origins of Thought and Language*.

[7] For example, Lakoff 1987: *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*; Johnson 1987: *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*; and Lakoff & Turner 1989: *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*.

[8] Turner 1987, 9.

[9] Turner 1987, 9.

Turner brings in Aristotle and Cicero in order to demonstrate how ancient rhetoricians wanted to understand the connection between *figures of diction* and *figures of thought* and mental processes such as *invention* and *conception*. These are problems with which Gregory, too, would be familiar as a result of his hellenistic paideia, and he raises similar problems in his own writings. For instance, in the following lines from *Oration* 32, where he admonishes his audience to seek to comprehend

> how the various senses function and how the mind uses these to relate to objects outside itself and take them in; how it receives the forms; and what is meant by the retention, or memory, of what it receives; and what by the retrieval or recall of what is past; how word is engendered by mind and engenders word in another mind, and how thought is transmitted through word ...[10]

Gregory the "philosophical rhetorician" knows that theology is not merely a matter of words, that words are expressions of cognitive processes and that texts, in order to be understood, require the active mental response of readers and listeners as well. This brings us to the crucial observation that the instruments of thought when applied to inventing and interpreting literary texts are also basic to everyday thought. [11] True, in literature and rhetorical speech these instruments may be used in more specialized and inventive ways than in the everyday mind. Nevertheless, the fact that they are the same in principle is the reason why rhetoricians and poets are able to communicate with ordinary readers and listeners. In spite of their lack of special training in verbal art and rhetorical reasoning, ordinary audiences are able to understand and respond to what they read and hear. What we are normally not aware of, however, are the conceptual systems activated in the mental process of meaning construction. And since linguistic expressions "prompt for meaning rather than represent meanings, linguistic systems do not have to be, and in fact cannot be, analogues of conceptual systems", according to the findings of Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner. "Prompting for meaning construction is a job they can do; representing meanings is not".[12]

How, then, is it possible for us today to interpret ancient Christian texts

[10] *Or.* 32.27.12-16. Vinson 2003: Gregory of Nazianzus, *Select Orations*, 211.

[11] Turner 1996, 7.

[12] Fauconnier & Turner 2002: *The Way We Think*, 277.

such as Gregory's? The answer is that we still experience the world in ways similar to Gregory. We still share a number of his cultural presuppositions, values and attitudes, and much of our cultural knowledge takes the form of conventional images that have remained the same over the centuries. His texts evoke images stored in our long-term memory that enable us to reconstruct the meanings prompted by his rhetorical apparatus. Take, for example, the following lines from Gregory's *Or.* 14.4-5:

> ... contemplation is a fine thing, as is action:[13] the one because it rises above this world and advances towards the Holy of Holies and conducts our minds upward to what is akin to it, the other because it welcomes Christ and serves him and confirms the power of love through good works.
>
> Each of these forms a single road to salvation, which has as its certain destination one of the blessed and everlasting abodes ...[14]

Even today readers of this translated passage will understand that Gregory is describing alternative paths through life that lead to different destinations above this world. The source of his turn of phrase are two basic conceptual metaphors: LIFE IS A JOURNEY and GOOD IS UP. In combination these metaphors yield the metaphor of LIFE IS A JOURNEY UPWARD or LIFE IS AN ASCENT. By mapping this metaphor onto the targets of contemplation and good works respectively, Gregory interprets the former as a "mental journey", the latter as its physical equivalent:

> for just as there is a wide variety in life so in God's house also there are *many rooms*, assigned and distributed on the basis of individual merit. One man may excel in one particular virtue, a second in another, a third in several, a fourth in all, if he can. Let him but attempt the journey and press forward, following in the steps of the one who with good guidance and direction leads us through the *narrow way* and *gate* toward the wide spaces of heavenly bliss.[15]

In the section quoted above, the translator has highlighted a few words which are not Gregory's own but quotations from the Bible, the first from John 14.2, where Jesus says "in my Father's house there are many rooms", the second referring to his words in 7.13-14, "the gate is narrow and the

[13] καλὸν θεωρία καὶ καλὸν πρᾶξις.

[14] Vinson 2003, 41-2.

[15] *Or.* 14.5. Vinson 2003, 42.

road is hard that leads to life". This combination of biblical quotations and references with his own discourse is typical of Gregory's rhetoric. It is a feature of his work that is particularly interesting when seen in the perspective of twentieth-century literary theory. In his magisterial study of Gregory's intellectual biography, John McGuckin has done exactly this. In his own words:

> Twentieth century literary theory, aware of the complexities of text and subtext and their correlation with ranges of meaning, leaves the modern reader in a peculiarly "open" state to the letter, and this might help towards a contemporary reassessment of what this most subtle of ancient rhetoricians wanted to say through the craft of words.[16]

A key example of such an "open" state in McGuckin's reading of Gregory is his discussion of the vision Gregory's mother Nonna had in answer to her prayers for a child:

> She longed to see a male child
> in her house – something many may wish for –
> and so she spoke to God and prayed to obtain
> her wish. Since she was so determined,
> she promised to give the gift she hoped to receive:
> thus in her eagerness did she anticipate its granting.
> And indeed she did not fail to obtain her dearest wish:
> there came to her a propitious foretaste,
> a vision bringing a foreshadowing of her request.
> For my appearance, together with my name, was clearly revealed.
> That favour, appearing by night, was genuine,
> for I was born to them, if indeed I am worthy
> of the prayer, the gift of God who granted it. ...
> As soon as I arrived I immediately became another's
> by means of a beneficial estrangement; for to God
> I was offered like a lamb or a sweet calf,
> a noble sacrifice and one endowed with reason –
> I would hesitate to say, like a second Samuel,
> if I did not have in mind the longing of those who offered me.[17]

[16] McGuckin 2001: *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, xxv.

[17] *Carm.* 2.1.11 (*De vita sua*), 68-80, 87-92, trans. in White 1996: Gregory of Nazianzus: *Autobiographical Poems*, 15-16.

In this "overarching and frequently repeated image", Gregory's "self-defining image in his rhetorical account of his early self", is synopsized, says McGuckin, the "formative stress" that his mother Nonna imposed on her son's "young psychology".[18] Through a careful reading of the biblical imagery that Gregory introduces into his own autobiographical narrative, McGuckin is able to discern a pattern by which Gregory deconstructs his father's manipulative power, built on the Roman notion of *patria potestas*,[19] "rooted in the notions of law, subjection, and inferiority", in which "the concept of love or parental dotage was something very secondary. Such relations pertained primarily to the age of infancy, and were largely the domain of the household's women."[20] In his meticulous analyses of Gregory's oratory, McGuckin shows how the Roman concept of *patria potestas* is fundamentally undermined by the rhetorical use of biblical symbolism and the Pauline doctrine of the superiority of the spirit, and that his most significant power base was his mother. "In the son's adoring eyes it was Nonna that was the Sun of the family, setting in the shade the frightening figure of the bluff squire, his father".[21]

Quite apart from the fascinating picture McGuckin's analyses give us of Gregory's retrospective construction of his family relationships, the analyses are also highly interesting from a methodological point of view. In order to make sense of Gregory's rhetorical accounts of his father and mother, McGuckin *reframes* them by projecting onto Gregory's story two different concepts of the family, one centred on the strict father and the *patria potestas*, the other on the mother as the nurturant parent, whose role Gregory in due course takes over, when in a dream he appears before his ailing mother feeding her the white communion bread from which she recovers. "Feeding his mother white bread signals Gregory's transition from the role of the child fed milk by his mother. Now he has reversed the role".[22]

In cognitive terms, McGuckin uses the Strict Father and the Nurturant

[18] McGuckin 2001, 24.

[19] In Roman family law, *patria potestas* – father's power – was the power that the male head of a family exercised over his children as well as over his more remote descendants in the male line, whatever their age, as well as over those brought into the family by adoption.

[20] McGuckin 2001, 16.

[21] McGuckin 2001, 19.

[22] McGuckin 2001, 23.

Parent models of family as conceptual *frames* in order to understand Gregory's autobiographical rhetoric.[23] Frames in this sense are cultural assemblies of knowledge[24] and part of what cognitive scientists call the "cognitive unconscious" – mental structures we cannot consciously access, but know by the way we reason and what counts as common sense, as well as by the way they are brought to expression through language.[25] Their verbal expressions enable us to recognize and describe such frames through the rhetorical analyses of texts. A contemporary scholar such as McGuckin shares with his readers the models of family by means of which he interprets Gregory's texts. And as McGuckin's study shows, these models have their counterparts in Gregory's own concepts of family, as these are conveyed in his rhetoric. The Strict Father and the Nurturant Mother models apparently belong to those tenacious concepts that are stored in our cultural long-term memory.

The mental operation of framing is, as Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner have demonstrated, a simple kind of *conceptual integration*, or *blending*. Blending is a cognitive mechanism that forms part of our mental make-up. It is a mental operation fundamental to the way we think.[26] As such, blending is something Gregory shares with his modern readers. In his rhetoric, we recognize blending most easily in the form Mark Turner describes as *parable* or *projection of story*. Parable in this sense, Mark Turner explains:

> begins with narrative imagining – the understanding of a complex of objects, events and actors as organized by our knowledge of *story*. It then combines story with projection: one story projected onto another. The essence of parable is its intricate combining of two of our basic forms of knowledge – story and projection. This classic combination produces one of our keenest mental processes for constructing meaning.[27]

In order to demonstrate how such *parabolic projection* operates in Gregory, we may go back to his account of his mother's dream and his own birth. The relevant lines come in the last part of the passage (*Carm.* 2.1.11.87-92):

[23] On the importance of these models today, see Lakoff 1996: *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think.*

[24] Turner 2001: *Cognitive Dimensions of Social Science*, 12.

[25] Lakoff 2004: *Don't Think of an Elephant*, xv.

[26] Fauconnier & Turner 2001, 120.

[27] Turner 1996, 5.

> As soon as I arrived I immediately became another's
> by means of a beneficial estrangement; for to God
> I was offered like a lamb or a sweet calf,[28]
> a noble sacrifice and one endowed with reason –
> I would hesitate to say, like a second Samuel,
> if I did not have in mind the longing of those who offered me.

In the three comparisons reproduced here, Gregory represents himself as a "lamb" or a "calf" to be offered to God, and as a "second Samuel". In this way, he projects into his own story about himself and his mother elements from two other birth stories, about women whose wombs are closed until opened and rendered fertile by God, and of promised children offered to God: Hannah and Samuel in the Old Testament story, Mary and Jesus in the New Testament: Gregory's mother corresponds to Mary and Hannah,[29] God as the recipient of Nonna's prayers corresponds to God the Father of Christ, and to the Old Testament God. Gregory corresponds to Samuel, as well as to Christ in their roles as promised sons dedicated to God. But, as Mark Turner emphasizes, the essence of conceptual integration is its creation of a new mental assembly. The blend is not identical with any of its inputs, and neither is it merely a correspondence between them. Usually it is not even an additive combination of some of their features. Instead, it is a new conceptual space with new emergent meanings that are not available in any of the input spaces.[30] Meanings are thus the imaginative products of such blending, and are not predictable from the forms used to evoke them.[31] It is only in the blended space that Gregory emerges as another Samuel and another Jesus. And by the same token, both these figures are modified as a result of Gregory's parabolic projection of their stories onto his own. Such creative use of scripture is a prevalent feature of all Gregory's writings, autobiographical, biographical and theological. In the following chapters, we shall see how their authors try to trace his prompting for meaning by framing his texts in a number of different ways, depending on their scholarly background and ways of seeing the world.

[28] ὡς ἀμνός τις ἢ μόσχος φίλος; on ἀμνός and μόσχος referring to Christ, see Lampe s.vv.

[29] On the complex relationship between the conception of Jesus and Samuel see Vermes 2000: *The Changing Faces of Jesus*, 212.

[30] Turner 2001: *Cognitive Dimensions of Social Science*, 17.

[31] Fauconnier & Turner 2002, 147.

2

Gregory contemplating the beautiful: Knowing human misery and divine mystery through and being persuaded by images

Frederick W. Norris

Gregory the Theologian found in Greek paideia much more than Basil did and Basil used much. Both drank deeply from the founts of hellenistic wisdom and culture; they were by some standards elegant literary stylists. Gregory preferred Basil's letters to his own.[1] Yet in the extraordinary funeral oration honoring the Caesarean, an address that George Kennedy called "probably the greatest piece of Greek rhetoric since the death of Demosthenes",[2] Nazianzen insisted that such wonderful education should hold first place among all thoughtful people. Christians should not think of this "external culture. . . as treacherous and dangerous and as turning us away from God". It offered sound "principles of inquiry and speculation" that provided "profit for piety" by teaching anyone "to distinguish the better from the worse". Such schooling, of course, included things that "[led] to demons and error and the abyss of perdition". But viewed as a tool for Christians who focused on "salvation and the beauty that is accessible to the mind", Greek learning could be quite helpful.[3]

The necessary guide through hellenistic paideia was concentration on deliverance from sin while accepting from the Greeks various methods and all the elegance that the mind could grasp. A similar description appeared when the Theologian was speaking directly about theology and the struggle of the Christian community to win and keep the hearts of all people, particularly the young. In writing his poem "On Matters of Measure", which explained why he composed poetry, Gregory noted that he wanted "to see to it that strangers have no advantage over us in literature. For their sake I

[1] *Ep.* 53, Gallay (ed.) 1969: Gregor von Nazianz, *Briefe*, 49.

[2] Kennedy 1983: *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, 237.

[3] *Or.* 43.11-12, Bernardi (ed.) 1992: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 42-43*, 156-163, trans. McCauley (ed.) 1953, 35-36.

speak in highly-colored language, even though beauty, for us, is in contemplation".[4] The appropriation of truth lay in meditation on the ultimate splendor of God, nevertheless rhetorically ornate words could assist people of his culture in seeing it. Divine beauty exceeded what the mind could take in, but contemplation was the mode for considering it.

As a rhetorician of some note Nazianzen insisted that the point of any discourse was not the ability of the orator to drug the audience with pleasing but vacuous words. That very denial, however, was deeply rooted in his hellenistic rhetorical studies. Some of the most florid passages written by Greek rhetoricians deal with their repudiation of garish rhetoric. Furthermore in at least one instance Gregory responded to a question posed by Jerome. He suggested that Jerome watch what happened to the congregation when he turned on all his native powers, honed so sharply by both his rhetorical education and his years of practice. The applause would prove that his gifts were impressive and moving.[5] Stunning images and startling phrases had their place in spite of his apparent public denunciation of them. They were basic to speaking about human and divine nature.

In his brilliant *Theological Orations* Nazianzen warned that theologians must be something other than wooden logic choppers. The Neo-Arians sensed that they could go after knowledge of God in the same ways that one would work on any logical problem. In Gregory's words, his opponents were overwhelmed by their "complete obsession with setting and solving conundrums«.[6] On the contrary, being a theologian demanded maturity in worship. A good theologian knew the limits of the topic, not the least because such a person had taken seriously the elementary rules of rhetoric. Not all subjects were to be discussed before all audiences on all occasions by all speakers. Talking about God involved restriction; among other things it demanded long experience in meditation.[7]

That need for contemplation of God led to a vision of knowing and

[4] "On his own Verses", *Carm* 2.1.39, *PG* 37, 1333, trans. Gilbert (ed.) 2001, *On God and Man: The Poetry of St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, 154. The Greek title is "On Matters of Measure" and thus entails much more. See McGuckin's chapter (10).

[5] Jerome, *Ep.* 52.8, *PL* 22, 534-535. Gregory's motive in so responding to Jerome is not particularly clear. Was he preening, or was he helping a student see what rhetoric could accomplish?

[6] *Or.* 27.2, Gallay (ed.) 1978: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 27-31*, 72-73, trans. Wickham in Norris 1991, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*, 217-218.

[7] *Or.* 27.3-4, Gallay (ed.) 1978, 76-81, trans. Wickham in Norris 1991, 218-219.

persuading through images, a demand that theology be marked by suggestive imagination rather than analytic subtlety. Or perhaps more precisely, employing analytic subtlety as the expected method in the search for the nature of God, and thus discovering its inadequacy, led to the choice of compelling images as the way to approach the unapproachable. This view probably had its root in the life of his family; it doubtless grew during his education. As a highly skilled rhetorician, who may have been offered one of the few teaching posts in rhetoric at Athens, he was alert to the importance of a number of the ancient disciplines. He praised some of the major males in his life for their command of various aspects of the hellenistic curriculum, each in a somewhat different manner.[8]

Mastery of such things, however, led one to see how important literature and rhetoric were. One passage in Gregory's "Fourth Theological Oration" makes clear his dependence upon finding images, rather than solving logical puzzles:

> Our noblest theologian is not one who has discovered the whole – our earthly shackles do not permit us the whole – but one whose mental image is by comparison fuller, who has gathered in his mind a richer picture, outline or whatever we call it, of the truth.[9]

As one who believed that silent meditation expressed publicly through powerful images was the task of theology, he could retire from the life of a bishop after a series of public debacles and set himself to writing poetry. Only 19,000 verses have survived of the over 30,000 that Nazianzen evidently wrote. They cover everything from autobiography to epigrams. This second effort beyond his orations fits well within his succinct view of theology and only enhances his claim to being the Theologian.

It is, however, in the struggle with the Neo-Arians that he staked out his view. Our twentieth-century educations have made it difficult even to consider his approach, let alone grasp it. For most of us logic and philosophy were presented by our Enlightenment influenced teachers as the best of all disciplines. Mathematics, particularly mathematical logic, might be the

[8] The orations on his brother (Caesarius), his father (Gregory senior), Basil and the others have the standard Greek rhetorical device of tracing their educations, yet those depictions vary for each person. Burrus' chapter (8) studies the funeral oration on his sister Gorgonia, a breakthrough in female hagiography and an encomium with a markedly different flavor.

[9] *Or.* 30.17, Gallay (ed.) 1978, 258-259, trans. Wickham in Norris 1991, 274. Børtnes' chapter (3) looks more deeply into Gregory's use of mental images.

apogee. Modern interest in rhetoric, however, has often marked one as a person suited for bad politics, if not for life as a slimy used-car salesman. Only poetry and some kinds of literature have had a chance to slip beneath the ridicule and open a window for fresh air. But too seldom has it been the case that the study of theology moved in order of importance first through poetics to rhetoric and then to logic/philosophy rather than following the opposite path and sometimes skipping rhetoric and poetics altogether.

The best of Gregory's Neo-Arian opponents were exceptional logicians. Even later Orthodox church historians granted their prowess, although the church historian Socrates pointed out some moves which they did not understand.[10] Nazianzen's antagonists were logic choppers, people who did not grasp the limited nature of the discipline, let alone the major issues entailed in theology. As I have argued elsewhere,[11] the Theologian was a master of technical rhetoric who knew the rules and went beyond them with panache.[12] He also understood the philosophical rhetoric Plato sketched in the *Phaedrus* and had studied at least some of Aristotle's so-called logical treatises included in what we call the *Organon*. But he probably read Aristotle either from a handbook or more probably from a manuscript tradition that could envision rhetoric and poetry as ways of knowing, parts of a broad epistemology that did not rest on a logic formed exclusively by syllogisms. Some Stoics near the time of Christ, and various later Syriac and Arabic writers on logic, had read Aristotle evidently from such a manuscript collection.

Using that view of Aristotle, and knowing himself to be primarily a theologian, Gregory never overvalued syllogistic logic. His forte, however, was not irrational appeal. He argued well. When told by his Neo-Arian antagonists that he must decide whether the Son existed or did not exist when that Son was created, Nazianzen replied that he would not be forced into such a box. He claimed that the liar's paradox does not yield to a single yes or no solution; it was actually amenable to both yes and no responses. Asking whether time is in time or not, or inquiring whether or not you

[10] Socrates *Hist. Eccl.* 2.35 and 4.7, *PG* 67, 297B-C and 472C-473C agreed that their reputation for logic was strong, but he also noted that they had not fully understood Aristotle's *Categories*.

[11] See Norris 1991, 17-39.

[12] Hägg's chapter (7) shows how much Nazianzen adapted the expected forms of rhetoric for a funeral so that in the selected cases he presents those forms in a variety of ways.

were present to yourself when you were conceived or are present to yourself now, would similarly yield no yes/no solution. Answers to these types of questions offered three possibilities. The Neo-Arians were not wrong to think that one or the other could be true, but they seemed unaware that both could be false or both could be true. The yes/no structure does not provide the only rule for settling every issue.[13]

Furthermore Gregory knew that the *enthymeme* of Aristotle's rhetoric was a two-proposition form that could summarize a formal syllogism for an audience so that those hearers or readers would themselves provide the middle term. It was a brilliant way to formulate syllogistic arguments in order to involve an audience or a reading public. But it could also introduce the discussion of significant human issues that could never fit into syllogistic treatment. As Jacques Brunschwig notes, the syllogism is a "greenhouse flower" that must be cared for delicately while rhetorical argument thrives in the street.[14] The *enthymeme* can live well in the rough and tumble of human life, in so many of its political or everyday situations. The Theologian put the *enthymeme* to both uses. But he seems to have been particularly interested in the latter use because, to express the point in some of our contemporary terms, theology is always a probability discipline. The nature of God is beyond us; we even have trouble understanding each other's pain.

Human Misery

Beauty as the focus of contemplation is clear in Gregory's works. When he concentrated on human life he had both a strong ideal of what humans made in the image of God should become and a developed sense of the extreme difficulty they had in reaching the goal. His anthropology always included a modicum of hope, an understanding that however great was the influence of sin, the image of God in which humans were shaped was marred but still struggling. Teasing the best from humans, a best that was always a part of who they were, formed a significant portion of the pastor's

[13] *Or.* 29.9, Gallay (ed.) 1978, 192-198, trans. Wickham in Norris 1991, 250-251. Narkevics' chapter (5) offers a closer look at the way the Theologian argued.

[14] Brunschwig 1998: "Aristotle's Rhetoric as a 'Counterpart' to Dialectic", in: Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, 51. Also see his 1994: "Rhétorique et dialectique, *Rhétorique* et *Topiques*", in: Furley & Nehemas (eds.), *Aristotle's Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays*, 57-96.

task. The scope of that art was giving wings to the soul, nurturing the central core of each human toward full participation in the divine nature.[15] God's plan was not merely to salvage a totally corrupted creation but to bring back the person to God's intended end. *Theôsis*, "deification", provided the picture: Christ became human in order that we might become divine. Only his assumption of full humanity could make it possible for humans to participate fully in the divine nature.[16]

Nazianzen rejected the approach taken by some Greek philosophers who tended to claim that the human body was the prison of the soul and the Manichaean doctrine that the body came from the root of darkness.[17] He did acknowledge the sad limitations of the flesh, the ways in which it could and did inhibit the growth of the soul. Nonetheless for him the body was not totally responsible for the miserable life of the soul. The mind reached the bad decisions. The body primarily cooperated in the debilitating project of sin. When speaking about lepers to a congregation that almost invariably avoided them, he very thoughtfully insisted neither that this wasting away of the body was a slow but sure avenue out of the fleshly prison nor that the disease itself was a punishment for sin. Leprosy was no gift to be enjoyed. Yet none could tell whether leprosy appeared as a deserved curse for breaking God's law or was given to those whose spiritual strength would allow them to bear the pain and the rejection.[18]

Specifically within this high anthropology, Gregory's utter disappointment with family and friends stood out. When he sketched his own life, misery dominated much of what he said. He was not a skeptical, penetrating judge of character. He expected the worst from non-Christians, both in their practices and their teachings and thus could honor their best.[19] But he anticipated that Christians would exhibit the virtues of

[15] *Or.* 2.22, Bernardi (ed.) 1978: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 1-3*, 158-160.

[16] *Or.* 21.1, 25.2 & 16, *PG* 35, 1084C, 1200B & 1221B; *Or.* 39.16, *PG* 36, 353B. Nazianzen was evidently the first in the history of Christian theology to use the word *theôsis*. See both Tollefsen's (13) and Papaioannou's (4) chapters. Norris 1996: "Deification: Consensual and Cogent", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 49, 411-428 presents an overview of the development of *theôsis*.

[17] "On the Universe", Moreschini & Sykes (eds.) 1997: St Gregory of Nazianzus, *Poemata Arcana*, 18-19 (*Carm.* 1.1.4), ll. 32-34 speak of the Manichees.

[18] *Or.* 14.30-31, 37-40, *PG* 35, 897B-900C, 907A-909C. *Or.* 14 is newly translated by Vinson (ed.) 2003: St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Select Orations*, 39-71.

[19] Norris 1994: "Gregory the Theologian and Other Religions", *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39, 131-140 sketches his praises of non-Christians.

Christ and tended to complain rather unvirtuously when they didn't. At the height of his career in Constantinople, the attacks both from Maximus the Cynic and later the bishops assembled for the Council of 381 caught him off guard. He befriended Maximus completely unaware that the handsome, gifted young man had support from Nazianzen's ecclesiastical enemies in Alexandria. This fellow's potential, so obvious to Gregory, was actually submerged in deceit. Maximus, who might have become his successor in the little congregation of the Resurrection, was dominated by his own ambition and little else. Finally the Theologian denounced him as a flute player who was elected the Nicene bishop of Constantinople in the middle of a brothel.[20]

Nazianzen did not expect that the circle from Alexandria and their friends, leaders who firmly supported the Nicene cause he espoused, would insist on his resignation from the see of Constantinople because he had served elsewhere as a bishop. He knew that he had assisted his father only as an adjutant bishop. His father and his friend Basil had badgered him into ordination for the backwater Sasima, but he had crossed swords with them by never occupying that lowly throne.

During his young adulthood even his beloved mother along with his father pushed him toward becoming a priest with the result that he fled his own home in order to reduce the pressure to conform to their wishes. None should force another to make such a decision. His great friendship with Basil, the most fulfilling relationship of his student days, faltered first when the Caesarian, without discussing it with him, departed Athens early to tour the monasteries of Egypt and Syria; later it failed when Basil demanded that he take the bishopric of Sasima. He never found a way fully to forgive his former friend; indeed the Caesarian seems to have shut him out of inner circle discussions because he did not do as he was told. In his letters to Basil, his autobiographical poetry and even his funeral oration honoring the Caesarean, he turned to various figures of speech to portray the betrayals. One beautiful but mournful epitaph, however, paints his own sorrow for the loss of Basil's friendship and then Basil himself.[21]

[20] McGuckin 2001: *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, 262-278, 311-325 points out the differences in Gregory's opinions about Maximus, first strong praise and later ridicule.

[21] Norris 2000: "Your Honor, My Reputation", in: Hägg & Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, 140-159 looks at the complicated relationship. *Epitaph.* 119, *PG* 38.72, Gilbert (trans.) 2001, 171.

These are all disheartening defeats that apparently could be observed rather straightforwardly within human life, yet Gregory knew that they could not be discussed without the use of rhetorical and poetic forms. Fully knowing other human beings' intentions or trying to deduce their plans from their actions was extremely difficult, always only a plausible suggestion, one never fully open to the subtleties of logic chopping.

When Gregory looked outside his own life to the lives of others, he found it easier to describe how any Christian ought to look at the poor and the lepers by speaking of the situations in picturesque language. He focused the attention of the Constantinopolitan community on such problems by rhetorically connecting the death of Christ for human sins and the Christian treatment of those economically less fortunate or those so pitifully diseased. He made his appeals through strong rhetorical arguments, images that convinced. Here, as a contemplative who painted the ugliness of poverty and leprosy contrasted with the beautiful life created by Christ, he empowered his congregation to recognize that the saved, sinners nursed to health, should assist those whose condition was so grave. Contemplation was good but so was action. He described the afflicted in poignant terms. Those with no voice, no breath, no hands and no feet gave thanks that they had no eyes to see their ravaged bodies.[22]

Not even the misery of human life in itself could be detailed without the use of images and carefully crafted phrases. Ugliness would have to be presented with the same attention to detail that the contemplation of beauty demanded for speaking of magnificence. The contrast would only be properly strong if the same approach were employed in discussing each.

Divine Mystery

When the Theologian turned from direct consideration of human nature and looked to the divine, he again connected the contemplation of beauty with the process of knowing. Before the creation God was not idle. "He who was ruling in the highest power over empty ages was active in contemplating his own splendour of beauty, one equal gleam of excellence expressed in the threefold light of godhead, as is manifest to that godhead

[22] *Or.* 14.4 and 16, *PG* 35.861C-864A, 876D-877[B], Vinson (ed.) 2003, 41-42 and 50. The oration argues that because Jesus offered forgiveness for everyone's sins, the rich should be happy to give to the poor and the sick.

alone and to those whose God he is".[23] Gregory, however, uttered a series of warnings about believers' considering God. Christians needed to attend to the worship of God more than they thought about breathing.[24] Meditating on God, however, was a daunting task. The Theologian castigated Plato for saying that the nature of God is inexpressible. That was a dangerous mistake because it implied that someone might be able to understand God's inner being but not be able to express it. The issue was much deeper. Plato should have known and said that God's essence is inconceivable.[25]

How can anyone know the inconceivable? First, the attitude and approach needed for the process was humble contemplation, something that went beyond the confidence or arrogance of most logical investigations. Second, what one meditated on were images that provided a glimpse of the unknowable divine nature in much the same way that one spoke of the more easily knowable but still ambiguous human nature.

Nazianzen was as furious at the Neo-Arians' methods as he was at their conclusions. He well may have believed that they assumed they could think God's thoughts and know his nature as well as God did. The Theologian certainly felt that he could beat them at their own silly games because of his contemplation as well as the breadth and depth of his education in philosophy, logic, rhetoric and poetry.[26]

Even when we recognize how convinced he was that meditating on the beautiful was the goal of humans and therefore that images, discreetly selected, carried the day then we can still see him struggling with the choice of which images held promise and whether they should be included in talk about God or not. He warned that he had found the search for adequate pictures of the Trinity to be frustrating. Looking for shadowy outlines of that mystery in normal human experience proved impossible for him. The images of "a source, a spring, and a river" looked encouraging. There was neither any "temporal separation" nor any "disruption of mutual connection". But this set of images failed because it seemed to allow "the idea of an incessant stream of Deity" and might "import the suggestion of a numerical unity". The "Sun, beam and light" should be pondered, but they

[23] *Carm.* 1.1.4.63-66, "On the Universe", Moreschini & Sykes (eds.) 1997, 18-21.

[24] *Or.* 27.4, Gallay (ed.) 1978, 78-79, trans. Wickham in Norris 1991, 219.

[25] *Or.* 28.4, Gallay (ed.) 1978, 106-109, trans. Wickham in Norris 1991, 226.

[26] The opening lines of *Or.* 27.1, Gallay (ed.) 1978, 70-71, trans. Wickham in Norris 1991, 217 insist that Gregory's Neo-Arian opponents' lack of paideia is one of their most significant defects.

involved "imagining in the incomposite nature the sort of composition that belongs to the Sun and its inherent properties". Those three images would also make "the Father a substance but the others potentialities in him, attributes of God not individual beings". In the end "the illustration suggests the idea, both of being and not being – and that is a greater absurdity than the previous suggestions".

Once he heard someone describe the Trinity

> in terms of a sunbeam which throws its radiance on to a wall; its trembling results from the movement of water, a movement transmitted through the intervening air and caught by the beam. The beam is then checked by the resistance of the wall and becomes a quivering that surprises one with its rapidity of oscillation. It is just as much a manifold at it is a unity; it joins and parts so quickly that it is away before the eye can catch and hold it.

But this image also had unacceptable aspects. The Sun "set the sunbeam in motion, whereas nothing is prior to God to be his mover – he is cause of all and owns no prior cause". This picture also hinted at "those very things which are inconceivable in the case of God – composition, dispersion, and the lack of a fixed, natural stability".[27]

As much as images were fundamental to his theology, they must be sifted and employed with great care. The first of these images, "a source, a spring and a river" had been adopted by Gregory Thaumaturgus, Athanasius and Basil, theologians honored by Nazianzen. Thus when he warned about the deficiency of those pictures, he was critiquing forbears and colleagues.[28] Some of the other pictures most probably appeared in the works of people he admired, yet whose thoughts on these matters he sensed he must mildly rebuke.

More importantly, the attributes of God that were either enhanced or violated by these images were themselves concepts that he often took from authors he read during his hellenistic education. Non-Christian theologian/philosophers like Plato employed them; he cautiously borrowed their concepts. Such pagan writings formed a significant part of the context in which Nazianzen wanted to present his claims for Christian faith. He spoke of their views as outside and dangerous, but he also claimed a

[27] *Or.* 31.31-32, Gallay (ed.) 1978, 338-341, trans. Wickham in Norris 1991, 297-298.

[28] Gregory Thaumaturgus, *To Philagrius* 8; Athanasius, *To Serapion* 1.19; Basil, *Against Eunomius* 5. See Norris 1991, 211.

number of their insights.[29] Much like Origen, who could read and gain a great deal from all of them except those who denied God and providence;[30] he contextualized the gospel deeply within hellenistic culture.

Here the beauty of Greek thought provided much more than "principles of inquiry and speculation". It had positive things to say about God's nature. Indeed it is precisely at this point that we should remember Gregory's emphatic rejection of the apophatic approach to any discussion of God as the only one to follow. When asked what is the answer to two times five, at some point it is best just to say "ten" rather than offering a recitation of "not two, not three, not four" and so on. Even to say "no number, in short, under ten or over ten" will not do.[31] With that move he set up his criticism of the Neo-Arian definition of God as "unbegotten", for them the single appropriate name for God's nature. Among the several terms he took over from the hellenists were ones amenable to both kataphatic and apophatic approaches. They were both "ten" and "not two" answers.

In spite of these remarkable helps, Nazianzen at times thought that in trying to describe the Trinitarian reality "it is best to have done with images and shadows", deceptive and utterly inadequate as they are to express the reality. In each case, including the most promising newer one, critical intellect would have to accept part of these pictures and discard the rest. Within each example he offered, however, the weight of the negative connotations was so strong that the image had to be abandoned. Picturesque language was necessary, but much of it proved to be misleading.

The difficulty was that these images were suggested by daily experience. It is better "to keep close to the more truly religious view and rest content with a few words, taking the Spirit as my guide and, in his company and in partnership with him, safeguarding to the end the genuine illumination I had received from him, as I strike out a path through this world".[32]

Spirit-led meditation had illuminated the mystery of God. The "few words" that are most important for conversation about that mystery are from the Spirit. One inference is that these words were to be found in Holy Writ. But "safeguarding to the end the genuine illumination" that came from the Holy Spirit and "working in partnership with him" encouraged

[29] See Narkevics' chapter (5).

[30] Gregory Thaumaturgus, Crouzel (ed.) 1969: *Remerciement à Origene*, trans. Slusser (ed.) 1998: St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Life and Works*, 116.

[31] *Or.* 28.9, Gallay (ed.) 1978, 116-121, trans. Wickham in Norris 1991, 223-224.

[32] *Ibid.*

the Theologian both to arrange words of scripture in ways that his instincts and education suggested and to provide words of his own under the inspiration of the Spirit. He felt most comfortable and sensed that he was particularly persuasive when he gathered biblical phrases and images to depict the shadowy outline of truth and formed them according to inspiration from the Spirit that guided him through his practice of contemplation.[33]

For the Cappadocians, Gregory of Nyssa wrote the epistle that spelled out the meaning of some technical terminology for the Trinity.[34] Gregory of Nazianzus was not annoyed by the Nicene philosophical terminology for the Trinity; he could use it, but he often employed different images. As he preferred to avoid the inadequate images from nature that at times he knew he must lay aside in sadness, he also did not take up intricate philosophical discussions as adequate either.

What this skilled philosophical rhetorician and imaginative poet did at significant points in his development of theology was shun images from contemporary life, pass lightly over the technical philosophical terms from pagans or Christians that offered some assistance, and turn directly to scripture itself. When he wished to present a proper view of Christology, he attacked his Neo-Arian opponents' misuse of the Bible and stated a few general principles that could guide all of them. Yet finally he amassed scriptural texts (about one hundred twenty-five quotations and illusions in the following extended passage) and balanced them alongside each other in ways that Holy Writ seldom did. By taking biblical images for the divine and human in the stories about Jesus Christ and placing them side by side, he presented a view that depended on longer narratives concerning Jesus, but used small bits from those stories to evoke the deep response necessary for the worship of God. In this instance facing one set of the troublesome issues in Christology, he drew on all his rhetorical and poetic education and skills to produce what I consider to be one of the best examples of his approach to theology.

> He whom presently you scorn, was once transcendent over even you. He who is presently human was incomposite. He remained what he was; what he was not, he assumed. No "because" is required for his existence in the beginning, for what could account for the existence of God? But later he came into being because of something, namely your salvation, yours who

[33] See McGuckin's chapter (10).

[34] *Ep.* 24, Pasquali (ed.) 1998: Gregorii Nysseni *Epistulae*, 75-79.

> insult him and despise his godhead for that very reason, because he took on your thick corporeality. Through the medium of the mind he had dealings with the flesh, being made that God on earth which is Man. Man and God blended; they became a single whole, the stronger side predominating, in order that I might be made God to the same extent that he was made man.
>
> He was already begotten, but he was begotten of a woman. And yet she was a Virgin. That it was from a woman makes it human, that she was a virgin makes it Divine. On earth he has no father, but in heaven no mother. All this is part of his godhead. He was carried in the womb, but acknowledged by a prophet as yet unborn himself, who leaped for joy at the presence of the Word for whose sake he had been created. He was wrapped in swaddling bands, but at the Resurrection, he unloosed the swaddling bands of the grave. He was laid in a manger, but was extolled by angels, disclosed by a star and adored by Magi. Why do you take offense at what you see, instead of attending to its spiritual significance? He was exiled into Egypt, but he banished the Egyptian idols. He had "no form or beauty" for the Jews, but for David he was "fairer than the children of men". And on the mount he shines forth, becoming more luminous than the Sun, to reveal the future mystery.
>
> As man he was baptized, but he absolved sins as God; he needed no purifying rites himself – his purpose was to hallow water. As man he was put to the test, but as God he came through victorious – yes, bids us be of good cheer, because he has conquered the world. He hungered – yet he fed thousands. He is indeed "living, heavenly bread". He thirsted – yet he exclaimed: "whosoever thirsts, let him come to me and drink". Indeed he promised that believers would become fountains. He was tired – yet he is the "rest" of the weary and the burdened. He was overcome by heavy sleep – yet he goes lightly over the sea, rebuked winds, and relieves the drowning Peter. He pays tax – yet he uses the fish to do it; indeed he is emperor over those who demand the tax. He is called a "Samaritan, demonically possessed" – but he rescues the man who came down from Jerusalem and fell among thieves. Yes, he is recognized by demons, drives out demons, drowns deep a legion of spirits and sees the prince of demons falling like lightning.
>
> He is stoned, yet not hit; he prays yet he hears prayer. He weeps, yet he puts an end to weeping. He asks where Lazarus is – he was man; yet he raises Lazarus – he was God. He is sold, and cheap the price – thirty pieces of silver; yet he buys back the world at the mighty cost of his own blood. A sheep, he is led to the slaughter – yet he shepherds Israel and now the whole world as well. A lamb, he is dumb – yet he is "word", proclaimed by "the voice of one crying in the wilderness". He is weakened, wounded – yet he cures every disease and every weakness. He is brought up to the tree and nailed to it – yet by the tree of life he restores us. Yes he saves even the thief crucified with him; he wraps all the visible world in darkness. He is given

> vinegar to drink, gall to eat – and who is he? Why, one who turned water into wine, who took away the taste of bitterness, who is all sweetness and desire. He surrenders his life, he has power to take it again. Yes, the veil is rent, for things of heaven are being revealed, rocks split, and dead men have an earlier awakening. He dies, but he vivifies and by death destroys death. He is buried but he rises again. He goes down to Hades, yet he leads souls up, ascends to heaven, and will come to judge quick and dead, and to probe discussions like these.[35]

Even in translation these lines beg to be read aloud. They depend on the faith of Christians, most directly on the shared narratives of the Gospels, but in a particular way they have more power than those narratives because of the density and cadence that Nazianzen gave them. Like the titles that he also employs, they have a staccato effect. This is one of a number of instances that indicate how Gregory's most powerful "poetry" can appear in his orations.

Conclusion

Byzantine readers of Gregory's writings often painted pictures of him that are far different from those sketched by modern scholars. They wrongly attributed a synopsis of logic and a commentary on the quadrivium to Nazianzen because they saw him as one who was a master of such things.[36] Others wrongly made Gregory the author of a liturgy and a literary presentation named *The Passion of Christ* because those pieces seemed true to his deepest concerns.[37] Their decisions about the authorship of those works were mistaken; their intuitions about the Theologian's program, however, were correct. Greek writers of commentaries on renowned rhetorical

[35] *Or.* 29.19-20, Gallay (ed.) 1978, 216-223, slightly adapted from Wickham's trans. in Norris 1991, 257-260. The importance of these lines to Gregory becomes most clear in his use of some of the same comparisons of divine and human aspects with a few different ones in his poetry, "On the Son", Moreschini & Sykes (eds.) 1997, 8-9, 1.1.2.57-77. It makes little difference whether the finally edited oration or the poem came first.

[36] *Anonymi Logica et Quadrivius, cum Scholiis Antiquis*, Heiberg (ed.) 1929. Some copyists from the 14th through the 16th centuries named this a work of Nazianzen.

[37] *CPG* 3097 is a liturgy attributed to Gregory that appears in Greek, Coptic, Armenian, Syriac and Ethiopic. In his Grégoire de Nazianze: *La passion du Christ*, Tuilier (ed.) 1969 argued that this piece was authentic, but most scholars have not accepted his judgment. *CPG* 3055-3125 denote the "Dubia" and "Varia" known to have carried Nazianzen's name.

figures so loved the rhetorical forms taken from Nazianzen's genuine pieces that they employed them as the quintessential examples, ones that displaced those from Demosthenes. Hymnographers mined his works for their creations.[38] Both groups were right to do so.

Such Byzantine praise[39] suggests that only when Greek education waned, particularly during recent centuries in which technical rhetoric slowly passed into the background and philosophical rhetoric all but died from lack of attention, could Gregory be viewed as a muddled minister or a simple preacher rather than the Theologian.[40] My hope is that the sometimes baffling understandings of various postmodernists and some of their critics will move us out of the "greenhouse" reliance on syllogistic logic and its variants in theology into a fuller engagement with the rough and tumble of the streets. The Theologian's insistence on the importance of images and mental pictures is clarified in such conversations. Dialogue between theology and science reformulates some of his argument in *Or.* 28 that because we know so little about nature and human nature, it is not odd to recognize how limited is our knowledge of God. When he uses contemplation

[38] The Oxford scholar Arthur Poynton placed a typed manuscript in select libraries including a copy given to the Library of Congress in Washington, DC on April 26, 1934: "Gregor of Nazianzus and the Greek Rhetoricians, A Supplement to the Index of Walz *Rhetores Graeci*, Vol. 9". He shows that Sceliotes in his commentary on Hermogenes used examples from Gregory rather than from Demosthenes. Karavites 1993: "Gregory Nazianzinos and Byzantine Hymnography", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 113, 81-98 looks again at how the works of Gregory provided sources for Byzantine hymnographers.

[39] Dependence upon the Theologian was not limited to Byzantines. Timothy I of Baghdad served (780-823) as *catholicos* (patriarch) of the East Syrian Church (Nestorian) that was spread from Cyprus to China. He received a theological and philosophical education based on a number of the common Greek and Greek Christian sources from previous centuries. Although his primary languages apparently were Syriac and Arabic, he often quoted Gregory not just from translation. He even wrote what may have been a commentary on some of Nazianzen's works, now apparently lost, in which he tried to show that the East Syrian tradition came not just from Nestorius, but also from the Theologian. He used that broadly accepted tradition, particularly its christology, to confront Muslim critics of the Gospel. See Hurst 1986: "The Syriac Letters of Timothy (727-823): A Study in Christian-Muslim Controversy" (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, The Catholic University of America).

[40] Meredith 1995: *The Cappadocians*, 45 notes some of Gregory's strengths but views him in many ways as a "derivative rather than an innovative writer". In his view the "traditional character of his writings" may be why later writers thought so highly of him. Nazianzen's innovative use of rhetoric and his gift as a wordsmith who coined about 500 new words stand against such judgments.

and illumination as the paths to knowledge he serves as a precursor for aspects of these contemporary conversations.[41] Within them philosophical and technical rhetoric thrive, poetry resounds and Gregory's contemplation of beauty through images offers uncommon strength and vision.

A number of our contemporary theologians have settled on narrative as the proper form for theology. That strikes me as a reasonable choice that Nazianzen would applaud. But too few of them have yet moved beyond the stories themselves to the Theologian's drumbeat of narrative bits for the divine and human in Christ, a performance that depended upon those Gospel accounts but in some ways still has more ability to move hearers or readers than they do.[42]

The Theologian would be rather astounded that theology has so often taken the path of narrow logic and full philosophy to make its cases rather than the orations and poetry he so preferred for the task of pastoral persuasion. Western academic theology, said to be of the highest quality, has quite often rejected rhetoric and poetry. Too many classical theologians since the 16th century are known for their tomes and not their hymns.

I find it intriguing that during the beginnings of the Western Enlightenment and to some extent even later, it was the music of the European Church that carried its theology to most people. How much more moving were the oratorios of Bach or Handel than the convoluted multi-volumed theologies of the Protestant-Catholic debate or the apologetic discussions with culture. In the twentieth century one of the most important books that Karl Barth wrote was his tribute to Mozart.[43] The same thing is true of Hans Küng.[44] Indeed Hans Ur von Balthasar's program fits the Theologian's understandings far better than Barth's dogmatics or Küng's volumes.[45]

[41] Murphy 2003: "On the Role of Philosophy in Theology-Science Dialogue", *Theology and Science* 1, 79-93 notices how important illumination was within medieval spirituality and still is for contemporary conversations between theology and science. She also insists on looking at metaphor. For her, 84, Lakoff & Johnson 1999: *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* "extend their earlier work on metaphorical language in two ways: one is by relating it to the cognitive neurosciences and the other is by exploring the role of metaphors in philosophy". Zee 1999: *Fearful Symmetry: The Search for Beauty in Modern Physics* explains that symmetry in non-technical terms and relates it on occasion to Buddhism.

[42] For instance see Frei 1993: *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, ed. Hunsinger & Placher, and Hauerwas & Jones (eds.) 1989: *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*.

[43] Barth 1996: *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, trans. Pott.

[44] Küng 1993: *Mozart: Traces of Transcendence*, trans. Bowden.

We should revel in the theme that described our project from its inception. The connection between aesthetics and cognition is overpowering, particularly for theology. Only within the search for beauty does the fullest recognition of Christian faith occur. Only when faith gives fullness to reasoning can human intellect reach its pinnacle. Setting the faith to new tunes and shaping theological images for those melodies were part of Gregory's late poetic agenda to make the Church interesting again. But it was more than that. It was a necessary part of human nature. For him Christ, "the lofty Word of Mind", following the intention of the mighty Father, had said in the midst of creation:

> Already pure and eternal servants inhabit the broad heaven, holy minds, singing hymns they celebrate my unending glory. But earth as yet rejoices in nothing more than senseless creatures. It is my will to compact from both sides a race partaking alike of things mortal and immortal, a man endowed with a mind set between the two worlds, taking pleasure in my works, an intelligent initiate of the heavenly realm, a great power upon earth, another kind of angel coming from earth to sing the praise of my mighty purposes and my Mind".[46]

Returning to the Theologian's views of aesthetics and cognition would bring theology back to its rightful home within poetry and rhetoric as well as logic and philosophy. Not the least of its rooms is song.

[45] von Balthasar 1983-1991: *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, Vols. 1-7 and his 1988-1998: *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, Vols. 1-5.

[46] *Carm.* 1.1.8.61-69, "On the Soul", Moreschini & Sykes (eds.) 1997, 36-37.

3

Rhetoric and mental images in Gregory

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In her "Introduction" to *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, Averil Cameron draws our attention to the Byzantines' "acute consciousness of the relation between the Christian word and the Christian image".[1] The interconnection between verbal and visual discourses was, according to Cameron, one of the central issues of the early Byzantine period, and when, eventually, the icon "became the staple of Christian society", it attracted its own sophisticated theology of representation". Religious images, Cameron concludes, "stand at the logical end of Christian representation. From Christology – the attempt to define the nature of Christ – the passage of debate to the theory of the image was utterly predictable".[2]

The Cappadocians played a decisive role in this process, not least as a source for the iconophile theologians who, during the iconoclast controversy, developed the theory of the image that was to become the foundation of the theology of the icon in the Orthodox church. All three – Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus – are extensively quoted in the florilegia to John Damascene's *Treatises against the Iconoclasts*.

When we read John's excerpts, however, we are struck by the fact that very few of his quotations from the Cappadocians actually refer to painted pictures, and even fewer to representations of explicitly Christian motifs. As far as I can see, there is only one concrete reference to such paintings. This reference is to be found in a quotation from Gregory of Nyssa, in which he introduces his own ekphrasis on the sacrifice of Isaac, by saying that he has "often seen images of this tender scene in pictures and ha[s] not been able to pass from seeing it without tears".[3] What we usually find in

[1] Cameron 1991: *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, 13.

[2] Cameron 1991, 226. One of Cameron's own contributions to the study of this interconnection is Cameron 1996: "The Language of Images: The Rise of Icons and Christian Representation", *Changing Cultures in Early Byzantium*, XII, 1-42.

[3] Greg. Nyss., *De Deitate Filii et Spiritus sancti, PG* 46.572c (p. 138.20 Rhein); Louth (ed.) 2003: John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, 115.

John's excerpts from the Cappadocians, are general references to painters and paintings, in particular to pictures of the emperor, which the Cappadocians deploy in their own discourse as part of their verbal imagery, in particular as part of a simile, in order to clarify a difficult theological argument, or in an ekphrasis, as a means of forming a visual image of it in their listeners' minds. A good example of the former is the following passage from Basil the Great's letter to Amphilochios on the Holy Spirit:

> Because the image of the emperor is called the emperor, yet there are not two emperors, for neither is the power divided nor the glory shared. For as the principle and authority that rules over us is one, so also is the praise that we offer one and not many, because the honour offered to the image passes to the archetype. What the image is by imitation here below, there the Son is by nature. And just as with works of art the likeness is in accordance with the form, so with the divine and incomposite nature the union is in the communion of the Godhead.[4]

Another of John's quotations from Basil, this time from his homily on the blessed Barlaam the Martyr, shows how the Cappadocian enlivens his ekphrasis with a rhetorical *apostrophe* to a fictitious audience of painters:

> Rise up now for me, O radiant painters of athletic achievements, and magnify the mutilated image of the general by your arts. The context in which he was crowned, described more dimly by me, you make radiant with the colours of your wisdom. Overwhelmed by you, I will refrain from describing the martyr's deeds of valour. Beaten by your strength, I rejoice today in such a victory. I see the struggle depicted most exactly by you, with his hand in the fire; I see the combatant, radiant with joy, depicted in your image. Let the demons howl, as they are now struck down by the valiant deeds of the martyrs now manifest in you. Let the burning hand be once again shown as victorious over them. May Christ, the judge of the contest, inscribe them on his list, to whom be glory to the ages.[5]

If we now turn to John's excerpts from Gregory of Nazianzus, we shall find no such examples of ekphrasis. In fact, ekphraseis of works of art of the kind quoted from Basil and his brother seem to be almost absent from Gregory's work. The only example I can think of is his description in *Or.* 25 of a painting representing Dionysos and his maenads. But as we know, *Or.* 25

[4] *De Spiritu Sancto* 18.45.15-23; Louth (ed.) 2003, 42.

[5] *Hom. in Barlaam martyrem* (*PG* 31.489a-b); Louth (ed.) 2003, 113-114.

is no longer attributed to Gregory and the editors have excluded it from the corpus of genuine texts.

In John's florilegia, there is only one text where Gregory speaks of a concrete painting. This text is a fragment from his second poem "On Virtue" (*Peri aretês*, 2):

> Neither will I pass over Polemon.
> For it was a marvel much spoken of.
> Formerly he was not counted among the wise,
> But rather was a servant of exceedingly shameful pleasures;
> Later, he was possessed by longing for the good,
> Having found a counsellor – I need not say who,
> Whether a certain wise man or even himself –
> Suddenly he was seen getting the better of the passions,
> So that I shall relate one of the marvels concerning him.
> A dissolute youth invited in a whore.
> But when, they say, she came up to the gateway,
> there, gazing at her, was Polemon in an *eikon*.[6]
> Seeing it, and it was awesome, indeed,
> she left at once, defeated by the sight,
> put to shame by the one depicted, as if he were alive.
> (*Carm.* 1.2.10.793-807, *PG* 37.738)[7]

As we can see, this is not an ekphrasis of a painting. Gregory does not describe Polemon's picture at all. He registers only its venerability and its thaumaturgic effect on the prostitute, the "magical power of the gaze", which Thomas Mathews has recently described as a common feature in early Christian and contemporary non-Christian eikons.[8] Since there is nothing specifically Christian about the setting, the eikon Gregory refers to belongs most probably to this second category. In modern scholarship Gregory's Polemon is assumed to be the rhetor Antonius Polemon (ca. AD 88-144), whom, according to Jerome, Gregory liked to imitate (Secutus est autem Polemonis in dicendo charactera – Hier. *de vir. ill.* 117). There may, however, be a conflation here with the Athenian Polemon, head of the Academy from 314 to ca. 276 BC, who, according to one account, quoted by Wayne A. Meeks, was "so profligate and dissipated that he actually car-

[6] Πολέμων ἐν εἰκόνι.

[7] Louth (ed.) 2003, 145. My translation of the second half of the fragment.

[8] Cf. Mathews 2003: *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*, in particular chapter 7, "The Intimate Icon", 177-195.

ried about him money to procure the immediate gratification of his desires, and would even keep sums concealed in lanes and alleys". A version of his transformation is related in Lucian's comic satire, "The Double Indictment" (17), where the proper maid Academy when accused by the courtesan Carousing (*Methê*) of having stolen her lover retorts that "I converted (*hupestrepsa*) him and sobered him and made him from a slave into a well-behaved, temperate man, very valuable to the Greeks." As Meeks observes, such stories about rescue and restoration of the deviant were "very familiar in the culture into which Christianity was born", and were later taken over by the Christians.[9] By introducing it into his poem, however, making it serve his own intentions as an example of the wonder-making power of virtue, Gregory Christianizes it, just as he would Christianize a pagan text by giving it a new meaning within the context of his own discourse. Understood in this perspective, Gregory's exemplum is an interesting gloss on the recent debate surrounding pagan and Christian domestic cult eikons in late antiquity.[10]

The story of Polemon is the only instance I know of where Gregory talks about a particular domestic eikon. But eikons in the sense of painted panels are discussed in a different context in *Or.* 4, Gregory's first Invective against Julian, written shortly after the emperor's death in 363 and published immediately. In the passage below, we see how his discourse slides almost imperceptibly from argument to ekphrastic description:

> There is a law relating to the emperor – I don't know if it applies to all peoples governed by a monarch, but among the Romans it is one of the most respected laws – that those in power should be honoured by official eikons.[11] For neither crowns, nor diadems, nor the brilliance of the purple robe, the innumerable lancers and the accumulation of subjects suffice to maintain their rule. It is also necessary to prostrate oneself in proskynesis

[9] Meeks 1993: *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries*, 22.

[10] Panel paintings of philosophers are discussed by Pliny, *Natural History*, 35.36.2, 5, in connection with Epicurus, whose eikons "were so popular in domestic cults that he blames them for the decline of the Roman tradition of verist ancestor portraiture". See Mathews 2003, 180 & n. 21. Gregory's anecdote later "became a stock argument in icon-odule argumentation," according to Demoen 1997: "The Philosopher, the Call Girl and the Icon: Theodore the Studite's (ab)use of Gregory Nazianzen in the iconoclastic controversy", in: Demoen & Vereecken (eds.), *La spiritualité de l'univers byzantin dans le verbe et l'image: Hommages offerts à Edmond Voordeckers à l'occasion de son éméritat*, 69-83, at 76.

[11] εἰκόσι δημοσίαις.

> before them, in order to make them more venerable, and not only before themselves, but also in front of their moulded and painted portraits[12], in order that their cult be all the more boundless and accomplished. In these eikons[13], different emperors like to be represented with different forms of ornament. Some like to have the most splendid cities bringing them their gifts; others victories crowning their heads; others again dignitaries of the Empire performing their proskynesis in front of them, receiving the insignia of their position; others hunting scenes and their own hunting skills; others various depictions of vanquished barbarians thrown under their feet or killed. For they do not only love the reality of the deeds that is the cause of their pride, but also their images.[14] (*Or.* 4.80, my translation)

And again:

> What kind of trick is [Julian] thinking of? What kind of deceit is he setting up for the most incorruptible of the Christians? Like those who mix poison with food, he wants to mix impiety together with the honours customary reserved for the emperors and bring together into one the laws of Rome and the worship of idols[15]. To this end he adds to their portraits those of the pagan gods[16] and presents the images[17] like any other, customary representations[18] to peoples and cities, and above all to the governors of the provinces in such a way that it is absolutely impossible not to fail: either by paying homage to the emperors and at the same time to the idols, or by abstaining and thereby insulting the emperors, since the proskynesis is mixed. Only a few of the most circumspect and intelligent escaped this trick and this snare of impiety, contrived in such a sophistical way, and those who did paid for their intelligence, the pretext being that they had violated the honour due to the emperor, while in reality they had risked condemnation in the name of the true emperor and the true faith ... (*Or.* 4.81, my translation)

Neither Basil nor Gregory saw the Roman ruler-cult as the problem it had been in apologetic literature before the fourth century. Then it had prevented many Christians from entering public service and had also sometimes formed the basis of persecutions. But as Norman Baynes pointed out

[12] ἐν πλάσμασί τε καὶ χρώμασιν.

[13] Ταύταις ταῖς εἰκόσιν.

[14] ἰνδάλματα.

[15] εἰδώλων προσκύνησιν.

[16] ταῖς εἰκόσι συμπαραγράφων τοὺς δαίμονας.

[17] τὰς εἰκόνας.

[18] ἐξ ἔθους γραφάς.

many years ago, with the advent of a Christian ruler, Eusebius had been able to refashion the Hellenistic theory of kingship to suit the new situation. In his oration, composed for the celebration of the Tricennalia of Constantine the Great, there "is clearly stated for the first time the political philosophy of the Christian Empire, that philosophy of the State which was consistently maintained throughout the millennium of Byzantine absolutism". "It is remarkable" – Baynes concludes – "that the State, which had only a few years before been persecuting the Christians, on whose rulers Lactantius had poured a flood of his invectives, is now transformed into a μίμησις of heaven".[19]

In this μίμησις of heaven, the emperor appeared as the eikon and vicegerent of Christ.[20] It is only when Julian combines the eikon of the emperor with eikons of the pagan gods that the Christians are again forced to choose between paying homage to both the emperor and the idols or abstaining from the proskynesis and being accused of lese-majesty, running the risk of being condemned for the sake of "the true Emperor and the true faith" (*Or.* 4.81).

From such evidence as Gregory's diatribe, it seems to me that there is a clear and close connection between the cult of the emperor and the cult of Christ the "true emperor" in fourth-century Christian thought. This is also the traditional view, put forward by art historians such as André Grabar, Ernst Kitzinger and Hans Belting. Recently, their views have been contested by Thomas F. Mathews, who maintains that "Christ stole the looks of the gods with whom he was in competition",[21] and that, therefore, the origins of the Christian image cult must be sought in cult representations of the pagan gods, not in imperial iconography. Even though Mathews rightly claims that Christian and non-Christian painted cult images existed side by side for centuries, in spite of the disapproval of the bishops, this, as far as I can see, does not exclude the possibility of a crucial connection between the cult of the imperial image and the development of an official eikon worship in the church. Moreover, Gregory's rejection of Julian's new representations of the emperor together with the old gods, shows that at least in the fourth century eikons representing Christ in the image of the

[19] Baynes 1974: "Eusebius and the Christian Empire", *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays*, 168-172, at 168.

[20] The Roman ruler-cult had already been Christianized by the first half of the fourth century. Cf. Baynes 1974.

[21] Mathews 2003, 185.

old gods would have been regarded as utterly unacceptable. One has to bear in mind that official Roman symbolism was often polyvalent. An example of such polyvalence is the "throne with religious or imperial attribute(s)", discussed by Hjalmar Torp in his analysis of the mosaics in the Rotunda at Thessaloniki, which, incidentally, he dates as early as before 380, maintaining that "the vast Rotunda was rebuilt and embellished with mosaics not only to serve as Theodosius' palatine church during his sojourn at Thessaloniki but also as a monument to his trinitarian faith, based on evangelical and apostolic authority, as defined by the imperial edict of February 380".[22] Given the official Christian acceptance of the cult of the emperor as the eikon of Christ, the "true emperor", it is difficult to disregard the imperial element in Early Christian iconography.

Although the adoration of imperial images and statues had been confirmed by law, Gregory's feelings about them nevertheless remained ambivalent. Many years later, when he returns to the topic in *Or.* 28, "On the doctrine of God", the second of his five *Theological Orations*, he criticizes those

> who have worshipped eikons and statues,[23] first of their beloved ones, in particular those most exposed to grief and with the closest relationships with the corpses, honouring the departed with memorials. Later even those of strangers, too. Men remote from these strangers in time and space and ignorant of the first nature, followed the traditional worship as a law and a necessity. For with time the custom consolidated into a law. And I think flatterers of power, too, who praised and admired physical strength and beauty, in the course of time made a god of the worshipped person, having found some myth to support their deception. (*Or.* 28.14)[24]

Worshippers of images and statues have erred in their efforts to comprehend God and the first cause. For since thinking beings are unable to grasp this, they may do one of two things:

> Either they look at things visible and make of these a god – a gross mistake, for what observable thing is more sublime, more godlike than the observer, and to what degree, that it should be the object, be the subject, of worship?

[22] Torp 2002: "Dogmatic Themes in the Mosaics of the Rotunda at Thessaloniki", *Arte medievale*, I:1, 11-34, at 28.

[23] εἰκόνας καὶ πλάσματα.

[24] In addition to Gallay (ed.) 1978: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 27-31*, I have used the translations of Wickham & Williams in Norris 1991: *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*.

> – Or they discover God through the beauty and order of things seen, using sight as a guide to what transcends sight without losing God through the grandeur of what they see (*Or.* 28.13).

In his description of the first category, Gregory shows how those who make gods of visible things end in paganism, making gods of their own emotions, erecting statues which they honour with "reeking blood", giving each "counterfeit god or devil a name", taking God's glory and attaching it to "monstrous animals, four-footed beasts and reptiles" (*Or.* 28.15).

Basing himself on Romans 1.23 – "and exchanged the immortal God for images of mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles" – Gregory alludes here to the heresy of the Eunomians, against whom the *Theological orations* were directed. A theology like theirs, which claims that it can define God's nature, runs the risk of idolatry, just like those who make gods out of visible things.[25]

In contrast to the first principle, according to which gods are made out of visible things, the second principle conceives of God as transcending the order and beauty of creation:

> reason[26] has taken us up in our desire for God, in our refusal to go without guide or helmsman, and making us apply ourselves to the visible world and to meet with the things which have been since the beginning, did not make us stop at these ... but leads us through them to what transcends them and by which they have their being. ... Thus reason that proceeds from God[27] that is implanted in all from the beginning and is the first law in us, and is by implication inherent in all, has led us up from visible things to God (*Or.* 28.16).

But not to the discovery of what God is in nature and essence. This discovery, according to Gregory, will take place

> when this godlike and divine thing,[28] I mean our mind and reason,[29] mingles with its kind, when the copy returns to the archetype of which it has now the desire[30]... . But for the present what reaches us is but a scant emanation, and as it were a small effulgence from a great light – which means

[25] Cf. Norris 1991, 119.

[26] ὁ λόγος.

[27] ὁ ἐκ Θεοῦ λόγος.

[28] τὸ θεοειδὲς τοῦτο καὶ θεῖον.

[29] λέγω δὲ τὸν ἡμέτερον νοῦν τε καὶ λόγον.

[30] τῷ οἰκείῳ προσμίξῃ, καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν ἀνέλθῃ πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον, οὗ νῦν ἔχει τὴν ἔφεσιν.

> that anyone who has known God or whose knowledge of him has been attested in the Bible, we are to understand have possessed a degree of knowledge that made him seem more fully enlightened than another not equally illuminated. This superiority was reckoned knowledge in the full sense, not because it really was so, but by the contrast of relative strengths (*Or.* 28.17).

In order to prove his point, Gregory cites a long list of patriarchs, prophets and apostles known to have had a vision of God: Enos, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Elijah, Manoah, Peter, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Paul, John, Solomon and David. In effect, as Frederick Norris observes, "Gregory successfully rehearses deeds and words of important biblical figures, including the incarnate word, to support his view that, according to scripture, humans do not have the power to comprehend God's essence".[31] Gregory is fully aware of the limitations of language. As a theologian he is not "logocentric" in the sense of being "satisfied with metaphors", and thus falling victim to what Derrida refers to as "conceptual idolatry".[32] One might ask, however, whether Derrida's concept of "logocentrism" might not be used to describe Gregory's opponents among the leaders of the Neo-Arian community. The logocentrism of their linguistic theory may be inferred from Frederick Norris' reconstruction, the gist of the theory being that "names designate essence". "God himself gave language to humanity". Hence "authentic names of all things go back to God and are not subject to human invention". And since "God himself revealed language, his essence is to be sought in his name".[33]

In contrast to the Neo-Arians, Gregory sees language as emerging from human "thought" or "inventiveness". As he makes clear in the *Theological Orations*, Gregory insists on the distinction between "meanings" and "words". In his theory of language, names do not reveal nature. For "things of the same and things of differing status can have the same name" (*Or.* 29.14).[34]

If we turn our attention away from the theological content of the passage and focus instead on the way Gregory uses scripture, we are immediately struck by the freedom with which he uses the biblical references. Abraham, for instance, is quoted for having been "justified by faith", and

[31] Norris 1991, 122.

[32] See Ward 2000: *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory*, 13.

[33] Norris 1991, 61f.

[34] Norris 1991, 33f.

his sacrifice for its "foreshadowing of the great one to come"; Jacob's anointing a pillar "had a hidden meaning perhaps, a revelation of the rock anointed for our sake". He gave a place the name "vision of God" "in honour of what he dreamed". He "wrestled as man with God – whatever wrestling between God and man may be ... – and bore on his body the tokens of the wrestling"; for Elijah, it was "but a light breeze which indicated the presence, but not the nature of God"; Manoah "was overwhelmed by God in a vision"; Peter "would not let the apparition of Christ on board the boat", Isaiah "saw the Lord Sabaoth seated on his throne of glory, surrounded, enveloped, by six-winged seraphim praising him"; Ezekiel "describes God's chariot of cherubim, the throne above them, and beyond the throne the firmament. He describes the visionary figure he saw in the firmament, certain sounds, movements and actions too. Was this a day-time appearance, the kind seen only by saints? A veridical vision of the night? An impression upon the reasoning mind of companying with future, as though they were present, realities? Some other form of prophecy?" And Paul, "counts all knowledge in this world as nothing more than puzzling reflections in mirrors because it has its basis in small-scale images of reality", while Solomon "made it a goal of his wisdom to discover just how far off he was", and David "at one point calls God's judgements a 'great abyss' fathomless by sense, 'too wonderful' for him, 'too excellent' for him 'to be able to grasp'"(*Or.* 28.18, 19, 20).

Gregory's rhetorical strategy in these passages might perhaps be defined as a kind of "intertextuality", in the sense that his own discourse "builds itself up as a mosaic of quotations", as "absorption and transformation of another text", to quote Julia Kristeva's well-known definition, first formulated in her introductory essays on Bakhtin in the late 1960s.[35] As Elizabeth A. Clark has remarked, intertextual exegesis, often combined with Bakhtin's concept of "heteroglossia", became exceedingly popular in the study of early Christian and ancient Jewish modes of interpretation in the 1990s.[36] There is, however, a problem with applying the concept of "intertextuality" to orators such as Gregory, at any rate as it was originally defined by Julia Kristeva, who, *pace* Bakhtin's insistence on authorship,

[35] "toute texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations, toute texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte". Kristeva 1969: "Le mot, le dialogue et le roman", *Σημειωτική: Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, 143-172, at 146.

[36] For a state-of-the-art summary, see Clark 1999: "Intertextual exegesis", in: *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity*, 122-128.

ditched both author and audience and the notion of intersubjectivity. Instead, she claimed, "the notion of intertextuality installs itself"[37] as an "intertextual space", with the result that the "word/discourse is scattered in a thousand facets, in a multiplicity of contexts – in the context of *discourses*, in the intertextuality where the speaking subject as well as the listening subject are pulverised".[38] This radical concept of intertextuality as the subjectless "space" of the autotelic text fitted well with French structuralism at the time. It was subsequently adopted by Tzvetan Todorov in his presentation of Bakhtin, where it replaces the latter's concept of the dialogic voice and of the reader/listener as co-author.[39] It seems to me that Bakhtin's original concept of discourse as inherently dialogic and of the "living act of understanding" as a process that both recognizes the integrity of the text and seeks to "supplement" it,[40] would guarantee a more appropriate approach to an orator such as Gregory, who almost always combines in his rhetoric a protreptic orientation towards his audience with a strong emotive element, as a direct expression of his own attitude towards what he is speaking about.

Another, and to my mind more adequate approach to the early Church fathers and their rhetoric of quotation, has been developed by Mary Carruthers. Basing herself on the research of scholars such as Henri Marrou and Birger Gerhardsson, Carruthers highlights the age-old practice of studying the canonical books twice, a practice inherited by early Christian and medieval *paideia* from Greek and Jewish antiquity: "First one learned the text *verbaliter* ... Then the student went through it again, this time attaching mentally the gloss and commentary to the units of text which were already laid out like "seats" within his or her memory".[41] Not only in the elementary schools, but throughout all levels, including the rhetor schools and the schools of philosophy, "the pupils had to learn the most

[37] Kristeva 1969, 146: "À la place de la notion de intersubjectivité s'installe celle d'*intertextualité*".

[38] Kristeva 1970, 5-27, at 13-14: "Le mot/le discours se disperse 'en mille facettes' dans une multiplicité de contextes".

[39] Todorov 1981: *Mikhaïl Bakhtine: le principe dialogique*.

[40] Bakhtin 1986, 132-158, at 142.

[41] Carruthers 1998: *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*, 30. Cf. Marrou 1956: *A History of Education in Antiquity*, and Gerhardsson 1961: *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*.

important texts so thoroughly that they were able to repeat them from memory", Gerhardsson observes[42], emphasizing that memorization played a "general and basic role"[43]: "The general attitude was that words and items of knowledge must be memorized: *tantum scimus, quantum memoria tenemus*".[44] Frances M. Young makes a similar point in her discussion of quotation and allusion in Gregory, claiming that Quintilian "clearly represents the universal view when he treats memorising classical texts as an all-important element in education precisely to ensure that the rhetorically trained mind is well stocked and has an accumulation of usable material".[45]

More important still in our context, the emphasis on memorization does not mean that the texts stored in the memory were also to be reproduced *verbatim* in rhetorical or literary practice. On the contrary, in rhetoric the whole point was that memorized texts could be played around with, taken apart, and recombined into new patterns and new discourses. This is what Gregory does in his oration on the Father when he remembers passages from scripture. He takes them out of their narrative contexts, "forgets" their original meaning, and in a process of recollective cogitation transforms the narrative fragments into metaphorical or metonymical images of God's unknowability, i. e. images based on the metaphorical principle of similarity *and* difference – day-time appearances, visions of the night, impressions on the mind of future realities – or on the metonymical principle of contiguity: the light breeze indicating God's presence; tokens of the wrestling on Jacob's body.

The biblical imagery picturing God's unknowability serves as a preparation for the prolonged description of God's creation that follows (*Or.* 28.22-30). Starting with the premise that "reason took up in us a desire for God", that reason "looked on the visible world, lighted on things primeval yet did not stop at these ... but leads us through them to what transcends them" (*Or.* 28.16), Gregory launches into a description of the mind's ascent through the created, visible world. In his *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, George Kennedy gives a succinct resume of these passages:

> The high point of the oration on the Father, and perhaps of the series as a whole, is the extended description of the works of God's creation in all their beauty and diversity (28.22-30): man and his body, animals, fish,

[42] Gerhardsson 1961, 125.

[43] Gerhardsson 1961, 126.

[44] Gerhardsson 1961, 124.

[45] Young 1997: *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 100.

> birds, plants, the earth, sea, air, the heavens, and angels, up to the veil that separates us from vision of God himself. This passage, which is in outline a list, is given constant impetus by exclamations and rhetorical questions, and may be regarded as an ecphrasis of creation.[46]

In this ekphrasis of creation, Kennedy concludes, Gregory demonstrates his power as a preacher "to paint in words the wonders of the Father's world".[47]

Indeed, as Gregory says himself, towards the end of the fifth and last of theological oration, "On the Holy Spirit": "In short every faculty or activity of God has given us a corresponding picture in terms of something bodily" (*Or.* 31.22). When in the Bible God "sleeps", "wakes up", "is angered", "walks", and has a "throne of Cherubim", these things are not factual, Gregory argues. For "when has God ever been a subject of emotion? When do you ever hear that God is a bodily being? This is a non-factual, mental picture.[48] We have used names derived from human experience and applied them, so far as we could, to aspects of God" (*Or.* 31.22).

This is no longer *verbal* as opposed to *visual* discourse. It is a way of using language in order to transform mental images into what we might call in contrast to Cameron's concept of the "language of images" "images of language", or, more appropriately, "verbal eikons". Gregory uses his rhetorical skills in order to create verbal equivalents of the mental images – "eikones" or "pictures" – that enable him to "remember God",[49] "meditate day and night"[50] in "continual remembrance of God".[51] (*Or.* 27.4).

Mary Carruthers has reminded us of the fact that *mnêmê theou* is a technical term in early monasticism, used to describe "the constant meditation based on reading and recollecting sacred texts", a kind of "memory" which

> is not restricted to what we now call memory, but is a much more expansive concept, for it recognizes the essential role of emotion, imagination, and cogitation within the activity of recollection. Closer to its meaning is

[46] Kennedy 1983: *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, 225.

[47] Kennedy 1983, 226.

[48] Τοῦτο οὐκ ὂν ἀνεπλάσθη.

[49] μεμνῆσθαι Θεοῦ.

[50] μελετᾶν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός.

[51] τὸ μεμνῆσθαι διηνεκῶς.

> our rerm "cognition", the construction of thinking. Monastic meditation is the craft of making thoughts about God.[52]

It is a form of verbal image-making where the art of mimetic representation is less of an issue than the art of memory, or *mneme*, the main difference being that whereas the aesthetics of *mimesis* is concerned with relations of similarity between image and prototype or model, works inspired by *mneme*, Carruthers explains,

> stress the cognitive use and the instrumentality of art over questions of its "realism". *Mneme* produces an art for "thinking about" and for "meditating upon"... An art of tropes and figures is an art of patterns and pattern making, and thus an art of *mneme* or *memoria*, of cogitation, thinking".[53]

The concept of *mnêmê theou* helps us to understand the meaning of Gregory's mental and rhetorical eikons. He uses rhetorical imagination to create verbal equivalents of his mental, or cognitive pictures. In the chapter on "Image and Images" in her book *The Origenist Controversy*, Elizabeth A. Clark argues with special reference to Evagrius of Pontus that the idea of mental images formed part of a theory of perception taken over from the Stoics. When the senses or memory imprint an object on the mind, the Stoic ἡγεμονικὸν ψυχῆς, the result is an image.[54] In Gregory's poem "Cursory definitions" – Ὅροι παχυμερεῖς – we come across a definition of memory and perception that has a definite Stoic ring:

> Perception is some reception from outside.
> Memory is the retention of the images of the mind.
> Forgetfulness is the loss of memory.
> Recall of a memory I call recollection.[55]
> (*Carm.* 1.2.34.31-34)

In *Or.* 28, where he contrasts the external with the internal, he also raises the problem of oneiric images and the problem of evil thoughts:

[52] Carruthers 1998, 2.

[53] Carruthers 1998, 3f.

[54] See the discussion of mental images in Clark 1992: *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate*, 76.

[55] Αἴσθησίς ἐστιν εἰσδοχή τις ἔκτοθεν. Μνήμη, κάθεξις τῶν νοὸς τυπωμάτων. Λήθη δέ, μνήμης ἐκβολή. Λήθης δέ γε Μνήμη τις αὖθις ἣν ἀνάμνησιν λέγω. (*PG* 37.948.)

> There is much to be said about the other senses, which are a like receivers of external things not controlled by reason; much to be said about rest in sleep, and about imagining in dreams, about memory and recollection, evil thoughts, anger, and desire, in short, about all that governs this little world, the human being. (*Or.* 28.22.35-39)

Although modern science would reject the idea of mental images as impressions on the mind, the study of Early Christian rhetoric may benefit greatly from the development of the cognitive sciences in the 1990s, which has led to a renewed interest in mental imagery and the nature of metaphor and its pivotal role in philosophy as well as in theology. The neurologist Antonio R. Damasio argues, for instance, that "thought is made largely of images" and that "images are probably the main content of our thoughts".[56] Also non-image symbols like words and arbitrary signs are based on topographically organized representations, Damasio argues. And they can become images:

> Most of the words we use in our inner speech, before speaking or writing a sentence, exist as auditory or visual images in our consciousness. If they did not become images, however fleetingly, they would not be anything we could know.[57]

Against this background, we may turn with renewed interest to the function of the mental image in patristic and medieval epistemology. In *The Craft of Thought*, Mary Carruthers underlines the need for human beings to "see" their thoughts in the minds as organized schemata of images, or "pictures", and to use these for further thinking. This, she observes, is "a striking and continuous feature of monastic rhetoric, with significant interest even for our contemporary understanding of the role of images in thinking".[58] In this way, *mneme theou*, or constant meditation, based on reading and recollecting sacred texts, is a much more expansive concept than what we now call memory. First of all, it was "not an art of recitation and reiteration" but a "mnemotechnical craft".[59] Secondly, "crafting memories also involved crafting images in which those memories were carried and conducted", and from which *inventio*, the art of inventing or finding

[56] Damasio 2000: *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, 107f.

[57] Damasio 2000, 106.

[58] Carruthers 1998, 3.

[59] Carruthers 1998, 8.

in one's memory the words and images needed for meditation or rhetorical performance developed.[60] Again, this coincides with the findings of contemporary neurology, where memory is described as being "essentially reconstructive". Mental images are "*not* stored as facsimile pictures of things, or events, or words, or sentences", Damasio asserts; "there seem to be no permanently held pictures of anything ... whenever we recall a given object, a face, or scene, we do not get an exact reproduction but rather an *interpretation*, a newly reconstructed version of the original".[61]

Furthermore, this distinction between the *mnemic* and the *mimetic* may help us to understand why Gregory, when trying to find something at the end of his last theological oration with which God might be compared, simply declares that he has "failed to find anything in this world with which I might compare the divine nature":

> I had the idea, indeed others have had it too, of a source, a spring, and a river, and asked myself whether there was not something here corresponding with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ... . Another illustration I pondered over was that of sun, beam, and light. But here again there was the danger, first of imagining in the incomposite nature the sort of composition which belongs to the Sun and its inherent properties, second, of making the Father a substance but the others potentialities inherent in him, attributes of God, not individual beings. (*Or.* 31.31, 32)

In the final stage of his spiritual ascent, Gregory concludes that

> there is nothing that fastens my thought on the examples when I contemplate the mental image I have,[62] unless one takes part of the *eikon* and wisely discards the rest. So, in the end I resolved that it was best to have done with eikons and shadows,[63] deceptive and utterly inadequate as they are to express reality. (*Or.* 31.33)

So far, Gregory has used eikons in their cognitive function, as "sites upon which and by means of which the human mind can build its compositions, whether these be thoughts or prayers".[64] In this role, Gregory's mental and verbal images are an essential part of his cognitive invention and indispensable for his art and method of remembering God: "different faculties or

[60] Carruthers 1998, 7-14.

[61] Damasio 2000, 100.

[62] θεωροῦντι τὸ φανταζόμενον.

[63] τὰς μὲν εἰκόνας χαίρειν ἐᾶσαι καὶ τὰς σκιάς.

[64] Cf. Carruthers 1998, 72.

activities of God have been pictured for us in terms of something bodily[65]" (*Or.* 31.22).

Now, however, Gregory has reached a stage where mental and verbal eikons are no longer needed in their *mnemic* or cognitive function. By this stage, it is their ontological function or "truth content" that matters: whether they are like God or not in the sense of being mimetic epiphanies of the divine substance. And since God's substance is different, unlike everything and beyond all comparison, God cannot be *mimetically* visualized in the anthropomorphic imagery of the Bible. In Gregory there is only one way of imagining God as part of a *mimetic* relationship: a dynamic process of approximation and assimilation, until "this divine thing, I mean our mind and reason[66] mingles with its kin, and the eikon returns to the archetype it now longs for[67]" (*Or.* 28.17). The twofold character of this process is better understood if we see it in the light of Roman Jakobson's observation that the development of a discourse "may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or their contiguity. The *metaphoric way* would be the most appropriate term for the first case and the *metonymic way* for the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively".[68] In Gregory this double process moves towards a transcendent point where there is no longer any difference between eikon and archetype, and where "our human mind and reason" – this "divine thing" – "mingles with its kin", where the external relationship of contiguity has been replaced by the internal relationship of participation. This is the point of *theosis* or "deification", the goal of life in Gregory's anthropology.

But how can embodied human beings be eikons of a godhead situated beyond all creation? His poem "On the Soul" from the so-called *Poemata arcana*, is one of several texts in which Gregory depicts this relationship:

> With these words he took a portion of the new-formed earth
> and established with his immortal hands my shape,
> bestowing upon it a share of his own life. He infused
> Spirit, which is a fragment of the Godhead without form.

[65] ἄλλο τι τῶν σωματικῶν ἡμῖν ἀνεζωγράφησεν.

[66] ἡμέτερον νοῦν τε καὶ λόγον.

[67] ἡ εἰκὼν ἀνέλθῃ πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον, οὗ νῦν ἔχει τὴν ἔφεσιν.

[68] Jakobson 1956: "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances", in: Jakobson & Halle (eds.), *Fundamentals of Language*, 55-82, at 76.

> From dust and breath I was formed, a mortal man eikon of the immortal.[69]
> For it is the nature of mind to rule over both parts.
> Thus I have affection for one of the ways of life because of my earthly component,
> while I have in my heart a longing for the other life through the divine part in me.
> (*Carm.* 1.1.8.70-77)[70]

These lines give us a clear idea of how Gregory constructs his verbal imagery. He depicts the morphic event of his own creation by blending the two accounts of the creation of man in Genesis: "then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2.7) and: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him" (Gen. 1.27). But as we see, this is not a verbatim reproduction of the passages from the Bible. It is a creation of something new out of already existing material.

The creative freedom of Gregory's rhetorical art is perhaps best seen in the way he strains our imagination by combining his biblical quotations with the Homeric χείρεσιν ἀθανάτῃσιν, an allusion to *Iliad* 16.704, where Apollo, χείρεσσ' ἀθανάτῃσι, pushes Patroclus' shield to prevent him from climbing up onto the wall. The effect of this collage is an almost surrealist image of "the formless godhead's immortal hands" Yet, to his educated audience, this elegant variation on Homer's elided nexus must have given the lines an extra refinement. Moreover, Georgia Frank, speaking of the Cappadocians' description of Moses' ascent as a "personal metaphor for the pursuit of God", observes that both Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa describe God in a language that "strikes us as frankly corporeal", in spite of their insistence on God's indescribability. They would, she adds, "probably have been surprised by how rapidly such embodied language was dropped".[71] As an example, she refers to Dionysius the Areopagite who in his *Mystical Theology* avoids God's body altogether, writing instead that Moses "does not meet God himself, but contemplates not him who is

[69] 74-5 ἐκ δὲ χοὸς πνοιῆς τε πάγην βροτὸς ἀθανάτοιο / εἰκών ... My trans.

[70] Prose translation by Sykes 1997: St Gregory of Nazianzus, *Poemata Arcana*, 37 (modified and adjusted to the verses of the original).

[71] Frank 2000: *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Late Antiquity*, 89.

invisible, but rather where he dwells".[72] As we have just seen, however, Gregory, too, would drop the use of bodily imagery at a certain stage in his spiritual ascent.

In order to reach the core of Gregory's anthropology, however, we have to understand Gregory's "craft of thought" when he refers to himself, or rather to his own "self", as "the mortal image of the immortal".[73] How can Gregory be an image of God the Creator whose essence transcends all images and descriptions? The paradox is resolved when we recall that in patristic literature the epithet "immortal" is used as a metonym for Christ. As a mortal being Gregory was formed by the Creator's "immortal hands" into the "mortal eikon" of the "immortal" Son. Gregory, in other words, constructs a ***mnemic*** eikon of his own creation in order to visualize the *mimetic* "Urbild-Abbild" relationship between his own self and its divine archetype. Representing his embodied mind as the "the mortal image of the immortal", he models his own self on the embodied Son who is consubstantial with the Father and the Father's perfect image: "the Word of God, the timeless Son, the image of the prototype, a nature equal to his who begot him", as he puts it in the poem "On the Son", also in the *Poemata arcana*.[74] The human self is the eikon of the Father through its likeness to the Son.

In Gregory's rhetorical self-construction, the divine part is identified as the God-inspired spirit, as the mind – *nous* – whose nature it is to rule over both the earthly and the divine component of his self. But Gregory's *nous* is not the modern, post-Cartesian concept of the mind as intellect rather than feelings and wishes. It is not *ratio* as opposed to *imaginatio*, but a concept that comprises both. This is made explicit in another passage from "Cursory definitions":

> Nous is inner vision, not circumscribed.
> The work of the nous is thinking and imagining.
> Reasoning is inquiry into the images of nous,
> Which you make known with your organs of speech.
> (*Carm.* 1.2.34.27-30)[75]

[72] Quoted in Frank 2000, 90.

[73] βροτὸς ἀθανάτοιο εἰκών.

[74] *Carm.* 1.1.2. Sykes 1997, 4, 7-8.

[75] Νοῦς δ' ἔστιν ὄψις ἔνδον, οὐ περίγραφος. Νοῦ δ' ἔργον, ἡ νόησις, ἐκτύπωμά τε. Λόγος δ' ἔρευνα τῶν νοὸς τυπωμάτων, ὃν ἐκλαλήσεις ὀργάνοις φωνητικοῖς. (*PG* 37.947.)

Kenneth Paul Wesche has recently characterized Gregory's concept of nous as "that which is created in the image of God, with the natural capacity to move in unending ecstasy in the infinite depths of God through union with the eternal, uncreated divine Logos".[76] Another scholar, Joseph Barbel, claims that for Gregory God is the "great nous", and that in human beings nous is "cognition and expression", sometimes identical with his concepts of logos and eikon, and that with the nous human beings are given "the earthly cognition of God" (Mit dem Nus ist dem Menschen die irdische Gotteserkenntnis gegeben).[77]

Against this background Gregory's anthropology may be situated in an *eikon-theou*-tradition that is associated primarily with Origen. According to the latter, the *eikon theou* is the mind, or soul of man, which was created, not begotten or emanating. Even though the definition of the mind or soul as created in the image of God is not confined to Origin, his anthropology differs from others, according to Wesche, through the way he incorporates into his doctrine the teaching of St Paul in Colossians 1.15, where he claims that being created "in the image of God" has a twofold signification. First, "Our principal hypostasis is our being created in the image of the Creator". Second, man is created in the image of the divine Logos, the Son who, according to Colossians 1.15, is the true image of the Father. Thus, Wesche argues, Origen "understands that because the κατ' εἰκόνα τοῦ θεοῦ defines man by nature, and because the Image in whom the image is brought into being is the Son of God, the complete definition of man is 'imago imaginis,' the image who exists in the Image ... . Since the κατ' εἰκόνα is essential to human nature, it can never be lost, even when man falls away from God".[78]

Both Barbel and Wesche direct our attention to essential aspects of Gregory's anthropology. Furthermore, Wesche makes an important point by foregrounding the Origenist element in Gregory's concept of *eikon theou*. What is problematic, however, is Wesche's definition of nous as the "capacity to move in unending ecstasy in the infinite depths of God through union with the eternal, uncreated divine Logos", and Barbel's

[76] Wesche 1994: "'Mind' and 'Self' in the Christology of Saint Gregory the Theologian: Saint Gregory's Contribution to Christology and Christian Anthropology", *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39:1-2, 33-61, at 50.

[77] Barbel 1963: "Exkurse", in: Barbel (ed.), Gregor von Nazianz, *Die fünf theologischen Reden*, 279-295, at 284.

[78] Wesche 1994, 47.

assertion that with the nous human beings are "given earthly knowledge of God". From these general statements we might conclude that Gregory has been united with the divine Logos already in this life, while in his own words he has, through nous, the "divine part" of his self, "a longing for the other life". We might, I think, come closer to Gregory's rhetoric of cognition if we could modify Barbel's formulation to the effect that human beings are not "given earthly knowledge of God", but knowledge of God is "given to them as a task", (nicht gegeben, sondern aufgegeben). This would enable us to understand the instability and fluidity of Gregory's verbal imagery, as he moves between the recollection of a biblical past that can never be recovered, and a future that can never be defined. Haunted by the possibility of divine presence, Gregory creates a discourse in which this presence is continually postponed and displaced by the never-ending generation of new and different images. If, for instance, we insert our passage from "On the Soul" into its fuller context, we discover that Gregory's description of his birth at the hands of the Creator, which in our fragment appears closed and stable, is contradicted and destabilized by the flow of verbal imagery that precedes and follows it, until, in the poem's final lines, divine presence is signified by a simile that once more underlines its absence, deferring the possibility of presence into the future, which always has to remain open and indeterminate:

> As a seafarer, driven backwards by wintry squalls, returns to the port, having again spread his sail to gentler breezes, or has completed his voyage by laborious rowing, so we who have fallen from the mighty God complete our return voyage only with some effort.[79]

[79] *Carm.* 1.1.8.122-127, trans. Moreschini & Sykes (eds.) 1997, 41.

4

Gregory and the constraint of sameness*

Stratis Papaioannou

The following paper discusses Gregory of Nazianzus' responses to Greek models of ontology by surveying the interrelation between three distinct registers in his work: (a) his aesthetics of discourse, that is, his view on what ideal discourse is and how it operates, (b) his anthropology, his view of the ideal human self, or what might be termed aesthetics of existence, and (c) his projected persona, his self-representation. Through this joint examination I wish to show how Greek models of ontology, which were intrinsic in classical, hellenistic, and late antique Greek philosophical and rhetorical theory, functioned as the discursive horizon from which Gregory, a Christian rhetor, performed. It is this horizon that I term "the constraint" and which, I argue, was an ambiguous boundary simultaneously delimiting and inviting transgression, a finitude as well as an imagined infinity.

The constraint in the case of Gregory has the form of sameness. By this I refer to the dominant tendency of pre-modern Greek thought to define ontological sameness as that unity that underlies being, knowledge, representation, and ethics. From Plato and Aristotle to Stoicism and Neoplatonism, Greek thought often focused its discourse on the delineation of an ontology of sameness. This ontology endorsed certain criteria in further fields of discourse: absolute intelligibility to the human subject in models of cognition, representability through media regulated by transparency in aesthetics, and, in ethics, imitability by human agents who avoid the changes of passions and exemplify the virtues of sameness, *sôphrosunê* and *andreia,* self-mastery and manliness. In the confluence of ontology, epistemology, aesthetics, and deontology the ideal was sameness: sameness as unity,

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totality, identity.[1] Admittedly, the approaches toward the quest for sameness, taken by ancient philosophical schools, authors, and texts, differed significantly from one another. Still, the logic of sameness constrained premodern Greek discourses in a variety of ways; Gregory's response to this logic, especially through the aesthetics and anthropology that support his self-representation, is the theme of what follows.[2]

Sameness or To one's self

As an introduction to the issues involved, I should like to begin with the example of the reflections addressed *To Himself* that Marcus Aurelius recorded during the second half of the second century AD. Marcus Aurelius' so-called *Meditations* were read and valued in the time of Gregory (as the rhetorician Themistius, Gregory's contemporary, attests[3]). Furthermore, the *Meditations* display important similarities with Gregory's texts, a fact which led Georg Misch to place Marcus Aurelius as the immediate predecessor of Gregory in his celebrated *History of Autobiography*. Misch saw in Marcus Aurelius the first appearance of a private self-cognizing discourse; a discourse that, according to Misch, Gregory developed further

[1] My vocabulary here draws on Levinas and his critique of sameness (see Levinas 1969: *Totality and Infinity: an Essay on Exteriority*). Cf. Heidegger 1957: *Identität und Differenz*; Derrida 1998: *Of Grammatology*. See also Derrida 1978: "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas", in: *Writing and Difference*, 81f. and 109f. an eloquent and critical summary of the issues involved. For further discussions see Peperzak 1993: *To the Other: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*; Collins 2001: *Trinitarian Theology, West and East: Karl Barth, the Cappadocian Fathers, and John Zizioulas*; Thomson 2000: "Ontotheology? Understanding Heidegger's *Destruktion* of Metaphysics", *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8, 297-327.

[2] Self-representation in my discussion indicates a concept larger than than autobiography, as self-representation combines both what Georg Misch calls autobiography as style *and* as self-awareness (*Selbstbewußtsein*, namely autobiography proper for Misch); cf. Misch 1950: *A History of Autobiography in Antiquity*, I 10-11. Self-representation is thus the point where text and perception of self meet, but also, possibly, breach. On the term *aesthetics of existence* cf. Foucault 1985: *The Use of Pleasure*, 10-11. On the social context of Gregory's self-representation see McLynn's excellent (1998b) "A Self-Made Holy Man: The Case of Gregory Nazianzen", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, 463-483.

[3] Cf. Hadot 1998: *The Inner Citadel: the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, 21-22.

and Augustine perfected in his paradigmatic autobiography. For my purposes, it is not self-cognition but the struggle for sameness that makes Marcus Aurelius a suitable comparison for Gregory.[4]

As an aspiring Stoic, Marcus Aurelius identified nature as the ontological principle that regulated life. Marcus Aurelius insisted that behind all visible change lies the *one and same* nature. The following are eloquent examples of his insistence on ontological cosmological sameness (*To Himself* 6.37.1; 6.46.1; cf. 2.14.2; 4.32.2[5]):

> – The one who has seen the present things has seen all, whatever has come into being from eternity and whatever will be in infinity; for all are of the same kind [ὁμογενῆ] and form [ὁμοειδῆ].
> – As things of the amphitheatre and such places appear to you as being always [ἀεί] the same [τὰ αὐτά] and what is of the same form [τὸ ὁμοειδές] makes the sight satisfying, this is also what you experience throughout your whole life; for all, above and below, are the same [τὰ αὐτά] and from the same [ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν].

As these passages suggest, the sameness of nature is intelligible to the self. This is because, according to Marcus Aurelius, there exists a parallelism between the *rationale* (*logos*) of nature and the rationality (*logos*) of the human self. As Marcus Aurelius argues (cf. 6.58.1), to live in accordance with the rationality of one's own nature is to identify oneself with the rationality (*i.e.* the ontological frame) of nature. The concavity of common nature is thus inverted into the convexity of the self (namely, individual nature) and also, perhaps, vice versa; ontology is inverted into morality and

[4] Though Misch claims that typification and fixity in classical self-presentation derive from an ontology that favours sameness (cf. Misch 1950, I 62f.), his own inclination to see the history of autobiography as a history of the formation of self-consciousness (cf. I 1-18) shares some of the constraints of sameness delineated above. Note, for instance, Misch's near identification of representation with cognition, of selfhood with self-possession, autonomy, individuality and activity, and the subsequent identification of the process of self-cognition with the formation of the Western (as well as, in some respects, private and masculine) *modern* subject. Do Marcus Aurelius', Gregory's (discussed by Misch in II 600-624) or even Augustine's self-representations cohere with such a process? For in-depth discussion of the theoretical presuppositions of Misch's project (albeit without critical reservations) see Jaeger 1995: *Autobiographie und Geschichte: Wilhelm Dilthey, Georg Misch, Karl Löwith, Gottfried Benn, Alfred Döblin.*

[5] All references are to the edition by Farquharson; the translation of these as well as of all other quoted passages are my own.

morality into ontology.[6] Sameness regulates both Being and moral beings, who must be always self-similar, autonomous, self-mastering, immovable (1.8.1, 1.15.1, 1.16.1-7). It also stylizes aesthetics, as Marcus Aurelius' rejection of rhetoric, poetry, and theatricality suggests (1.7.2, 1.11.1). Ultimately, all of the above are encapsulated in the metaphor of gender through the glorification of the masculine, active self (3.5.1):

> Rhetorical refinement [κομψεία] should not beautify your thought; neither should you be of many words or meddling with many things. Furthermore, let the god inside you be a guardian of a living being which is masculine [ἄρρενος], mature, political, Roman, and ruler [ἄρξοντος]; ... joviality and self-sufficiency [τὸ ἀπροσδεές] regarding service or tranquility that others provide should be within you. For one must stand erect [ὀρθόν], not be erected [ὀρθούμενον] by others.[7]

It appears then that the *care of the same* was at the core of what has been termed the *care of the self*.[8] An affirmation of ontological autonomy and tautonomy was coupled with an aversion for movement, change and multiplicity as well as for femininity, theatricality, exteriority, and passivity.[9] Differences in scope, depth, and discursive frameworks do, of course, exist, yet this line of thought underlies the writings of many of Gregory's contemporaries. A few examples may suffice: Iamblichus' view of ultimate reality as a mode of being that remains always the self-same, just like the philosophy that is able to approach this ultimate reality; Julian's identification of philosophy with self-knowledge and self-possession; Himerius' insistence on Hellenic freedom and self-mastery along with his aversion to

[6] Cf. Levinas 1969, 289. For a different view see Hadot (e.g. 1995: *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, 206-213), who regards Marcus Aurelius' tendency toward universalization as being radically opposed to individuality – universalization is in Hadot's view a liberation from or a transcendence of individuality; cf. also note 44 below on Hadot and his view of Plotinus.

[7] Cf. the way in which masculine deportment is described in Pseudo-Polemon's *Physiognomonica* 55.1-10 (ed. Foerster): "The appearance of the masculine one is to be erect (ὄρθιον) in all respects ..." On rhetoric and gender categories see Gleason 1995: *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome*.

[8] Cf. Foucault 1986: *The Care of the Self*; see also Hadot 1995.

[9] For a rather synoptic, yet useful account of the implication of gender within models of ontology and cognition see Lloyd 1998: *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*.

hypocrisy, outward appearances and dissimilarity. It is a line of thought that by the third century had already reached monumentality with Plotinus' persistent image of total, simple and *one* self-sameness.[10]

What about Gregory? One will also find in him expressions that idealize ontological, ethical and aesthetic self-sameness. Let me quote three characteristic examples. The first is a reflection on the ultimate mode of Being, *i.e.* Christ as the sacrificial lamb and his scriptural pre-figurations (*Or.* 45.13; cf. Ex. 12.5). The second is a presentation of the ideal human self (*Or.* 36.9).[11] The third is a presentation of Gregory's ideal discourse, Christian theology as opposed to pagan rhetoric (*Or.* 21.12). Gregory writes:

> – He is "of the male gender" [ἄρρεν] since he is offered for the sake of Adam, or rather since he is more stable than the stable, than that first one who fell because of sin, and since he carries in himself nothing feminine [θῆλυ] or unmanly [ἄνανδρον][12]; ... He is "of a year old" as ... he returns to himself and he is blessed by a crown of goodness and is thoroughly equal and similar to himself [πανταχόθεν ἴσον ἑαυτῷ καὶ ὅμοιον].
>
> – ... [he] desires what is stable [τοῦ ἑστῶτος], and his willingness for the good is also stable; so that he experiences something divine, being able to utter even the phrase that belongs to God: "As for myself, I am the same [ὁ αὐτός] and I have not been altered [οὐκ ἠλλοίωμαι]" [Malachi, 3.6]. Therefore, he will neither be remodelled, nor transposed, nor will he undergo a change along with times and things, becoming [γινόμενος] other [ἄλλος] at different times [ἄλλοτε], and receiving various colours ...; but he will remain the same [ὁ αὐτός] always [ἀεί], steady in what is not steady, unturning among turning things.
>
> – There was a time when our things used to be at their prime, ... when this

[10] Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 4.7.21-23 (ed. des Places) and *Protrepticus* (ed. Pistelli): 118.13-119.3; Julian, *Εἰς τοὺς ἀπαιδεύτους κύνας passim* (ed. Rochefort); Himerius (one of Gregory's alleged teachers in Athens), *Or.* 3.12-19 and 5.150-162 (ed. Colonna); on Plotinus cf. e.g. *Enneads* 5.8.4.6-7 (ed. Henry-Schwyzer) – regarding Plotinus see also footnotes 32 and 44 below.

[11] In fact the entire oration 36 is a good example of how Gregory fashions himself with direct textual allusions as a new Socrates, the ideal example of self-mastery in late antiquity; see Vinson 1993: "Gregory Nazianzen's Homily 36: a Socratic Response to Christian Persecution", *Classica et Medievalia* 44, 255-266.

[12] The idea echoes Philo; cf. *De Mutatione Nominum* 261 (ed. Wendland). For a differing view found in Gregory see *Or.* 31.7; cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep. ad Euagrium* (*PG* 46 1104c).

> far-fetched and verbalistic and artistic [ἔντεχνον] type of theology was not even granted an entrance into the divine *aulas*. Saying and hearing something more novel and futile about God [Acts 17.21][13] and enchanting the spectators with varied [παντοίοις] and androgynous [ἀνδρογύνοις] dancing twists was considered identical to playing dice, which deceives sight with the fleetness of its transposition [μεταθέσεως]. It was the simplicity [τὸ ἁπλοῦν] and nobility of discourse that was considered to be piety.

In all three passages we encounter sameness glorified, opposed to change and multiplicity in all their forms: ontological decay, rhetoricality, theatricality, or (the persisting metaphor of gender) femininity.

Similar expressions abound in Gregory (as well as in the texts of his friends Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa) and the vocabulary is consistent. Gregory speaks often of the ambiguous gender of his opponents, rhetors and *hellênes* or bishops and rhetorical "chameleons", of the theatricality and fictionality of their rhetoric, of the fickleness of human nature which is multifaceted and constantly other; these negative qualities are in sharp contrast to the permanency and self-sameness of theology and God, to the masculinity of virtue as well as of discourse.[14] However consistent an impression this rough sketch may give, it obscures some of the subtleties and paradoxical contradictions in Gregory, who is also ready to activate marginal trends of thought within these Greek ontological models.

[13] On this and similar quotations by Gregory and the other two Cappadocians see Samuel Rubenson's chapter (6) in this volume.

[14] See *Or.* 2.46, 5.35, 19.4 (on ideal style: ἀνδρικόν τε καὶ σύντονον), 23.11 (on divinity: αὐτὴν ἑαυτῇ συμβαίνουσαν, ἀεὶ τὴν αὐτήν), 27.1-2.9-10; 28.2, 30.1, 31.15 (an echo of Plato's *Lysis* 214c7-d3 ?), 33.3, 38.5-6, 42.22; *Ep.* 11, 178 (on human life: τὰ τῆς μεγάλης ταύτης σκηνῆς παίγνιά τε καὶ θεατρίσματα), 204, 218 (on virtue: γενναίως καὶ ἀνδρικῶς); *Carm.* 1.2.15.133-147 (on self: ἄλλο πρόσωπον ... ἐξαπίνης ἐξεφάνην ἕτερος) and *passim* (cf. Gilbert, 1994: *Person and Nature in the Theological Poems of St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, 71-72), 1.2.29 *passim* (esp. 3-4 and 276-286), 1.2.33.67-74 (on harmful morality: θηλύσμασι), 2.1.12 *passim*; *De vita sua* 267-269. On Gregory's proclaimed aversion to sophistry see Ruether 1969: *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher*, 156 f. On Basil's rhetorical theory and, in my opinion, emphasis on sameness see Kustas 1981: "Basil and the Rhetorical Tradition", in: Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic. A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium*, Toronto, I 221-279. On the complicity of Nicene rhetoric with the cultural authority of virility and metaphors of gender see Burrus 2000: *"Begotten, Not Made": Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity*.

Enargeia: Infinity and otherness

It is textual aesthetics that provides Gregory with the general framework by means of which he challenges sameness.[15] For Gregory, discourse (*logos*) is understood as an interrelated nexus of cognition (*nous*), representation (*logos*) and reception (*akoê*) (*Or.* 2.39; 28.4; 32.14 and 27). *Logos* is a translator (*hermêneus*), an interpreter of intellection progressing toward a pure mind capable of reception (*Or.* 2.39; 32.14; 43.65).[16] Discourse is often said to be *presenting* (the verb is *paristêmi*) or *denoting* and *pointing to* (*dêloô* and *deiknumi*); language is thus a mediator (*Or.* 28.4 and 9; 30.16 and 20). This mediating power of *logos* is conceived by Gregory along the lines of what ancient rhetorical theorists called *enargeia* (in Latin, *evidentia*) – the term is usually translated as vividness, but perhaps would be better rendered as lucidity, transparency or visibility.

Within the ancient philosophical and rhetorical vocabulary, enargeia signified the potentiality of perception and thus conceptualization of reality through the senses, or the potentiality of representation of reality through discourse – in technical rhetorical language, enargeia meant the ability of the rhetor to present things, persons, or events as if they were real

[15] One should not forget that Gregory's culture is one in which hermeneutics, namely textual aesthetics, and the aesthetics of existence were closely intertwined; Gregory of Nyssa's *On the Life of Moses* is characteristic in this regard. On the close affinity between rhetorical argumentation and theological meaning see Edgars Narkevics' chapter (5) in this volume.

[16] This model utilizes Platonic (*Cratylus* 407e5-408a2 and *Ion* 530c3-4 with 534e4f.) as well as Philonic views (*De Somniis* 1.33 [ed. Wendland]; *Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat* 39.4-40.6 [ed. Cohn]; *De Posteritate Caini* 106-109 [ed. Wendland]); on Philo cf. Runia 1986: *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, 536. See also Athanasius, *De Sententia Dionysii* 23.3.1-24.1.1 (ed. Opitz) and, interestingly, Himerius, *Or.* 13.2-13. On *logos* as *ereuna* in Gregory see *Carm.* 1.2.34.29-30; an echo of Origen, *Selecta in Ezechielem (fragmenta e catenis)* 797.22-30 (*PG* 13)? Similar expressions are found also in Gregory of Nyssa; on his theory of language and interpretation see Mosshammer 1990: "Disclosing but Not Disclosed: Gregory of Nyssa as Deconstructionist", in: Drobner and Klock (eds.), *Studien zu Gregor von Nyssa und der christlichen Spätantike*, 99-123 (109: on *hermeneia*; also 116); cf. von Balthasar 1942: *Présence et pensée: essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Grégoire de Nysse*, *passim*.

and alive before the eyes of the audience.[17] Located within the semantic range of mimesis which dominated classical aesthetics, enargeia was a category that enabled a reevaluation of the process of mimesis. In the positive perspective of enargeia, namely the actual possibility of perception and representation, mimesis lost some of its negativity *qua* imitation, copying, doubling. Especially with reference to the theory of discourse, enargeia was implemented as an antidote to what was seen as the inherent mimetic theatricality of rhetoric and fictionality of poetry; an antidote that could safeguard the sameness between the exteriority of sensual or textual appearance and the interiority of cognition.[18]

Gregory was well attuned to such reevaluations of discourse. Enargeia,

[17] On *enargeia* as a category of aesthetics, epistemology and ontology see the various contributions in Lévy and Pernot 1997: *Dire l'évidence: Philosophie et rhétorique antiques*; see also Dillon 1983: "Self-definition in Later Platonism", in: Sanders (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* III: *Self-Definition in the Greco-Roman World*, 60-75, at 62; Zanker 1987: "Enargeia in the Ancient Criticism of Poetry", *Rheinisches Museum* 124, 297-311; and Lunde 2004: "Rhetorical *Enargeia* and Linguistic Pragmatics: On Speech Reporting Strategies in East Slavic Medieval Hagiography and Homiletics", *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 5, 40-80. Philo is not often discussed in this context, yet his influence on the matter is decisive for Christian philosophers such as Origen and the Cappadocians.

A term related to *enargeia* is *phantasia*; see Camassa 1988: "*Phantasia* da Platone ai Neoplatonici", in: Fattori & Bianchi, *Phantasia-Imaginatio*, 23-55; Webb 1997: "Imagination and the Arousal of the Emotions in Greco-Roman Rhetoric", in: Morton Braund & Gill (eds.), *The Passions in Roman Thought and Literature*, 112-127; Sheppard 1997: "*Phantasia* and Inspiration in Neoplatonism", in: Joyal (ed.), *Studies in Plato and the Platonic Tradition: Essays Presented to John Whittaker*, 201-210; and Manieri 1998: *L'immagine poetica nella teoria degli antichi: phantasia ed enargeia.*

[18] Cf. Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 12; ed. von Arnim) who maintains that the *enargeia* of sculpture (a metaphor for his own discourse) encapsulates the *one* nature of the divine and, thus, supersedes the multiplicity and theatricality of rhetoric and poetry. See also Philo, who similarly argues for the *enargeia* of discourse while rejecting poetry as well as rhetoric; cf. *De Cherubim* 56 (ed. Cohn), *De Opificio Mundi* 4, 149-150, 157 (ed. Cohn).

Philo was responsible for the dissemination of another transformation of mimetic vocabulary with his insistence on the imagery of imprint and impression (*tupos*) – it is a trend evident also in Gregory (cf. *Or.* 30.20.16-18 [on Christ as an imprint of the Father] and 23-25 [on *tupos* as indicating identity rather than difference]); on this see Papaioannou 2004: "Der Glasort des Textes: Selbstheit und Ontotypologie im byzantinischen Briefschreiben (10. und 11. Jh.)", in: Hörandner, Koder & Stassinopoulou (eds.), *Vierzig Jahre Institut für Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik der Universität Wien: Wissenschaftliches Symposion im Gedenken an Herbert Hunger*, 324-336. On mimesis see Halliwell 2002: *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems.*

or rather its cognates and associated concepts figure often in his texts.[19] The concept suits well his model of discourse as being the mediation of a content to a receiver. Still, Gregory stresses those aspects of the visibility of discourse that elude the primary emphasis on sameness that enargeia signifies. He does so with respect to the two extremities of the process of discourse: the signified content, and the reception. As far as the signified is concerned, Gregory claims that discourse allows for the presence of the signified in infinity; regarding reception, enargeia always instigates an experience (*pathos*) of otherness within the reader/listener. Both infinity and otherness are categories that challenge sameness.

Let us look at enargeia, first as presence and infinity. In his funeral oration to his brother,[20] Gregory writes (*Or.* 7.16):

> My gift is discourse, which perhaps even in future times will be perceived as eternally moving [κινούμενον], preventing the one who has migrated from departing entirely; a discourse that preserves continually [ἀεί] in the ears and the souls the one who is being honored, and presents an image [εἰκόνα] of the desired one [τοῦ ποθουμένου], an image which is more transparent [ἐναργεστέραν] than paintings.

The transparency of discourse is identified here as the ability of discourse to present that which is signified as being in infinite motion.[21] Discourse does not thus aim at the enclosure of the signified, but rather at its disclosure.[22] A similar sentiment is expressed in the final brush-strokes of Gregory's funeral portrait of Basil. Gregory writes (*Or.* 43.80):

> I thus do not mix lamentations with praises, but I paint through discourse [λογογραφῶ] the conduct of the man and I present him before time as a common exemplar of virtue and as a salvific public proclamation before all churches and all souls, in gazing upon which we may regulate our lives, as if gazing upon an animate law. However, I might advise you, the ones who are initiated in him, something other: to continually [ἀεί] gaze upon him

[19] While the noun *enargeia* is not used by Gregory, the concept itself frequently appears in his writings (cf. *Or.* 31.24, *Ep.* 249.20). Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and also Origen use it repeatedly.

[20] On this oration see the chapter (7) by Tomas Hägg in this volume.

[21] Cf. the end of the second speech against Julian (*Or.* 5.42).

[22] Himerius summarizes well the opposite view when he claims that discourse is better than painting in "capturing" (θήραν) truth (*Or.* 23.10-12); cf. *Or.* 32.36-45: on Pheidias' sculpting as "capturing" (θηράσαντα) the nature of Zeus (an echo of Dio Chrysostom's preference for static/*enargetic* sculpture over moving poetry? On Dio cf. n. 18 above).

> and, while Basil is both seeing and seen [ὡς ὁρῶντος καὶ ὁρωμένου], to be perfected by the Spirit.

Gregory argues that the ultimate aim of his discourse (the one appropriate to his initiated listeners) is not merely the exemplarization of its signified; it is not merely, that is, the transformation of Basil into an ideal paradigm. For the select few, the aim is a continuous relationship; first, between the self and an other, who both see and are seen, and then between the two seers, so to speak, and a third Other, the Spirit. Visibility is not merely the capturing of an object through sight, but an exchange of sight that allows for a third party to enter and complete the relation *ad infinitum.*[23]

This discussion of relationality leads me to the second aspect of Gregory's application of enargeia. Gregory often insists on the manner and degree in which discourse produces intense emotions to the reader. For Gregory, enargeia or the transparency of discourse generates a pathos in the audience, an experience of relation to or identification with otherness. Here, for example, is how Gregory presents his response to Jeremiah's Lamentations (*Or.* 6.18):

> As for myself, when I take this book and converse with the Lamentations (something that I do whenever I might wish to discipline well-being, taken for granted through reading) I lose my voice and I am full of tears and the *pathos* comes as if before my eyes and I lament together with the one who had lamented.

Similarly, in his crescendo against Julian, after citing a series of biblical passages and thus after simulating reading within his writing, Gregory concludes (*Or.* 4.17):

> Do you see how I weave the song with divine words and concepts? And I do not know how, but I take pride and I am beautified by what belongs to another [ἀλλοτρίοις] and I become [γίνομαι] almost inspired and possessed [ἔνθους] by pleasure [ἡδονῆς].[24]

[23] Cf. *Ep.* 238.5. In Himerius (*Or.* 8.207-212, a funeral oration) there exists a similar image of the departed one "gazing" from above, yet there is no interaction of sight as in Gregory. As Jostein Børtnes kindly reminds me, the concept of the presence of a third party within the relationship of two resurfaces in the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin; cf. Børtnes 2002: "The Polyphony of Trinity in Bakhtin", *Les polyphonistes scandinaves* 5, 137-147.

[24] Gregory's *enthousiasmos* derived from pleasure rings of Plato (*Philebus* 15d8-e1); however, in the *Philebus* the sentiment is rather negative: Socrates is asked to remove such "confusion" (16a7-8).

Such expressions of pathos effectuated by discourse are repeated elsewhere in Gregory (*Or.* 2.66, 28.21; *Ep.* 30), and I will discuss one more towards the end of this paper. For the time being, I wish to stress two elements.

First, it is significant that Gregory chooses to valorize those currents in Greek theory of discourse that promote pathos and, thus, introduce a possible element of rupture within an aesthetics dominated by sameness. The most notable representatives of such rhetorical views are Dionysius of Halicarnassus, "Longinus", and Plutarch. Indeed, Gregory's view of receptive pathos displays a closer affinity to Dionysius, who is perhaps the most affirmative, as well as personal, in his appreciation of intense receptive emotions.[25] Whether this – to a certain extent anti-platonic[26] – line of thought reaches Gregory *via* Origen (who speaks of the inspired possession of reading Scripture) or stems from his own rhetorical education, is difficult to determine.[27] What is more important (the second element of note)

[25] Dionysius, *De Demosthenis Dictione* 22.6-16 (ed. Usener-Radermacher): "Whenever I take one of Demosthenes' speeches I am inspired [ἐνθουσιῶ] ... receiving *pathos* one after the other [ἕτερον ἐξ ἑτέρου] ..." Cf. "Longinus" (*De Sublimitate* 15 on *enargeia, phantasia* and *pathos*; ed. Russell), who, however, ends his treatise by deploring *pathê* (44); that "Longinus" *On Sublimity* was perhaps among the readings of Gregory of Nyssa see Heath 1999: "Echoes of Longinus in Gregory of Nyssa", *Vigiliae Christianae* 53, 395-400. Plutarch (*De Gloria Atheniensium* 346.F.4-347.C.7; ed. Nachstädt) speaks of Thucydides' *enargeia* and how it incites *pathos* in his readers, yet in the introduction to a rather programmatic text (*Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat* 14df.; ed. Babbitt) he also highlights the dangers of reading with *enthousiasmos.*

[26] See Plato's *Ion* (e.g. 535d8-e6) for a rather sarcastic presentation of emotional intensity caused by poetic performances. In the *Republic* (Book 10: 605c6 f.) one reads of uncontrollable pathos induced by poetry as the worst aspect of mimesis; as is suggested there, this uncontrollable pathos is a trait that "belongs to woman" (605e1-2) – cf. Ferrari 1989: "Plato and Poetry", in: Kennedy (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* I: *Classical Criticism*, 135-136.

[27] Origen, *De Principiis* 4.1.6 (ed. Görgemanns-Karpp). Gregory once cites Dionysius of Halicarnassus and his rhetorical treatise on Lysias by name (*Ep.* 180); he also refers to "books of rhetoric" in *Ep.* 235. On Gregory's professional involvement with rhetoric see Neil McLynn's chapter (11) in this volume. Another possible influence of Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Cappadocian thought may be discerned in the Cappadocians' use of terms such as *idiotês, idiôma,* and *charaktêr* in order to denote *personhood* – it is these very terms that Dionysius employed in his discussions of individual style.

Not only Gregory but also other rhetoricians of the period speak of pleasure in the reception of texts; cf. Himerius, *Or.* 16.2-19 (on discourse as sweet *pharmakon* and on the submission to pleasure) or *Or.* 48.302-310 (on Herodotus) and Libanius (ed. Foerster), *Or.* 1.148.4-10 (on Thucydides), 129.6-130.3 (on Julian taking pleasute in Libanius' discourses), as well as 117.1-10 (on pleasure in the performance of discourse).

is that Gregory introduces Dionysius' and Origen's rhetorical *pathos-of-reading* into his own self-representation. Through the aesthetics of discourse, pathos is re-located in the projection and construction of an ideal self; intense receptivity is turned by Gregory into a basic ontological-anthropological category, a category which accommodates infinity and experience of otherness.

Mirrors: Receptivity and reflection

That the category of pathos for Gregory was no mere aesthetic principle, is revealed by the metaphors that he often employs to describe self, text and divine Being. Take for instance his persistent references to *bathos* or *buthos* (depth) or to unmanageability (words such as "difficult-to-reign-in" [*duskathektos*] or "free" [*aphetos, eleutheros, autonomos*]). Both sets of references had significantly negative connotations in Greek discourse, a negativity often retained in Gregory: *depth* may refer to the depths of the non-sensical (*Or.* 28.8; cf. *Or.* 28.7 and 43.11), while unmanageability may be applied to the youth crazed with sophistry or to the false *autonomy* of heresy and fiction.[28] However, both concepts are also used positively by Gregory in order to describe ideal selves, texts, as well as the realm of the divine, expressing notions of infinity and intensity. For instance, Gregory speaks of the depths of the receiving mind, the depths of meaning within a text, and the depths of Being within God[29] – God's depths of Being (what Gregory names "an abyss") cause an ever increasing sense of *vertigo* (a *pathos*) in the one who draws near them: "the more one steps into the depths, the more one becomes dizzy [ἰλιγγιᾷ]".[30] And again Gregory

[28] *Or.* 43.15: on the *duskathektoi* young sophists-to-be in Athens (cf. *Or.* 27.5); *Or.* 26.10, 28.8 and 15 [=*Or.* 39.7]: on false *autonomy*. Plato refers to the "infinite sea of dissimilarity" in his *Politicus* 273d4-e4 (cf. also Plotinus, *Enneads* 1.6.8); I thank Christine Amadou for the reference. Plutarch writes of the difficult-to-contain masses (*Numa* 4.8; ed. Perrin) and Basil of unmanageable desires (*Ep.* 2.2; ed. Courtonne).

[29] *Carm.* 2.1.12.816-817 (mind); *Or.* 4.118, 43.43 (text); *Or.* 28.6, 31.8, 43.65 (God). In *Carm.* 1.2.31.40 Gregory proclaims that "depth is what is dear to me" [βένθος ἔμοιγε φίλον], while his autobiographical poems are full of the various connotations of the metaphor; cf. Ruether 1969, 86-105.

[30] *Or.* 28.21; in the continuation of the passage Gregory adds: "so that I myself might suffer [πάθω] an equal experience". Cf. also *Or.* 28.12 (and Job 38.16). See also Basil, *Ep.* 38.6 and Gregory of Nyssa, *Eighth Homily on Ecclesiastes* 5.413-414 (ed. Alexander); cf. Harrison 1992: *Grace and Human Freedom According to St. Gregory of Nyssa*, 71-72. *Vertigo* has a negative value in Plato (cf. *Phaedo* 79c).

depicts himself, too, as an uncontainable and constantly moving nature, a nature that resembles the free nature of the true philosopher as well as the natures of *nous, eros* and *logos* – notions that owe much to rhetoric contemporary to Gregory and attributes that were much admired by the Byzantines.[31]

Yet Gregory's most potent self-applied image, encapsulating pathos as infinity and otherness, is that of the mirror. My first example comes from an autobiographical narrative, Gregory's description of contemplation (*Or.* 2.7; cf. *Or.* 20.1):

> Nothing seemed to me to be comparable to *near shutting the senses*[32] and going beyond flesh and the world, turning into oneself [εἰς ἑαυτόν], ... conversing with oneself [ἑαυτῷ] and with God, living beyond the visible, and carrying continually [ἀεί] pure in oneself the reflections [ἐμφάσεις] from God, unspoiled from straying earthly impressions, both being [ὄν] and eternally [ἀεί] becoming [γινόμενον] truly a spotless mirror [ἔσοπτρον] of God and the divine things ... If anyone of you is possessed by this *eros*, he knows what I mean and he will forgive my pathos.

[31] *Ep.* 10.3 (self as a hot-headed horse), *De via sua* 377 (self as a bird; also 490-491: cf. Plato, *Ion* 534b4 on the poet/rhapsode/interpreter); *Or.* 17.1 (on the *duskathektos* prophet), *Or.* 26.13 (on the *autonomous* philosopher), *De vita sua* 71 (his *duskathektos* mother); *Carm.* 2.1.17.55-58 (on the uncontainable *nous*); *Carm.* 1.2.34.42 (*eros* as *duskathektos pothos*); *Ep.* 48.4 (on autonomy of discourse), *Carm.* 2.1.13.18-26 (on uncontrollable *logos*). The Byzantines admited this aspect of Gregory's self: cf. John Mauropous in the eleventh century (a critical period for Gregory's reception): *Ep.* 27.7-8 (ed. Karpozilos); on the fashioning of Gregory's image in Byzantium *via* his own auto-hagiography see the chapter (12) by Stephanos Efthymiadis in this volume. On fourth century rhetoricians and *freedom* see Libanius, *Or.* 1.62 (on the free gentleman) or Himerius, *Or.* 48.197-201 (on self as *aphetos* horse), *Or.* 9.5 and 248-250 (the autonomy of poetry), *Or.* 36.56-58 (on *eros* rendering *logos* autonomous).

[32] Gregory's phrase "οἷον μύσαντα τὰς αἰσθήσεις" has some interesting parallels that remain unnoticed in the recent editions of *Or.* 2 and 20. See Origen *Contra Celsum* 7.36.5-9, 39.17 and 32, and 44.39 (ed. Borret) and Gregory of Nyssa *De Virginitate* 7.3 (ed. Aubineau). A passage from Basil (*Adversus Eunomium* I.3, 508.12-16; *PG* 29) should be mentioned here as well, although it is closer to Philo (*De Plantatione* 58-59; ed. Wendland) than to the phrases in the two Gregories and Origen. The closest parallel to Gregory's expression, however, is a passage from Plotinus (*Enneads* 1.6.8.23-27; cf. Proclus, *Theologia Platonica* 1.16.7-18 and 110.9-16; ed. Saffrey-Westerink). Is Gregory quoting as well as subverting Plotinus who in this very passage (1.6.8) presents his ideal paradigm of sameness, namely Odysseus' *return* to his fatherland? For a similar Plotinian echo see *Or.* 29.2, on which cf. Majercik 1998: "A Reminiscence of the *Chaldean Oracles* at Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 29,2: ΟΙΟΝ ΚΡΑΤΗΡ ΤΙΣ ΥΠΕΡΕΡΡΥΗ", *Vigiliae Christianae* 52, 286-292 (Majercik suggests that Gregory's source is Porphyry and not directly Plotinus).

Gregory's pathos is a double experience; one of ultimate receptivity[33] and one of infinite becoming. The ideal mode of being (applied here to Gregory's own self) is one that *is* both receptive of the other and *becomes* ever-receptive of the other. And Gregory leaves us in no doubt: this is a forgivable, or rather, a desirable pathos (cf. *Or.* 39.11).

The same pathos lies at the heart of the manner in which Gregory portrays his relations with others, not only with God, but also with his friend Basil as well as with his filial audience in Constantinople. Gregory's *pothos/pathos* for Basil has been treated often in the past.[34] Let me thus turn to the way he depicts his passion for his spiritual children of Constantinople. Gregory begins Oration 26 with the following words: "I desired [ἐπόθουν] you, my children, and I was equally desired [ἀντεποθούμην] in return ..." (cf. *Or.* 24.2). Then he continues with an encomium of the pathos of eros (*Or.* 26.1-2):

> Truly, for those who suffer from desire [πόθῳ] the entire life of a man equals just one day ... When I was with you I felt the pathos only slightly, but when I was separated from you, I learned desire, the sweet [γλυκύν] tyrant.

Gregory presents his desire for his audience as a suffering, as a tyrant[35] that is imposed upon the self as a welcome pain. Yet, why is pathos welcome? How does pathos as suffering operate? Gregory provides an explanation in the same paragraphs. He writes:

[33] It must be noted that for Gregory the only "action" involved in cognition (at least as far as true knowledge is concerned) is the *ability* of receptivity; cf. *Or.* 20.11 and 32.27, also *Carm.* 1.2.34.28 (on this text see also Jostein Børtnes' chapter [3] in this volume). One of Gregory of Nyssa's favorite terms for *cognition*, namely *hupo-lêpsis*, conveys a similar idea (see e.g. *De Vita Mosis* 2.178 and *passim*; ed. Daniélou) – the term is also used by Gregory of Nazianzus (e.g. in *Or.* 2.42).

[34] See e.g. recently Norris 2000: "Your honor, My Reputation: St. Gregory of Nazianzus's Funeral Oration on St. Basil the Great", Konstan 2000: "How to Praise a Friend: St. Gregory of Nazianzus's Funeral Oration for St. Basil the Great", and Børtnes 2000: "Eros Transformed: Same-sex Love and Divine Desire. Reflections on the Erotic Vocabulary in St. Gregory of Nazianzus's Speech on St. Basil the Great", in: Hägg & Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, 140-159, 160-179 and 180-193. On the *pathos/pothos* of friendship see e.g. *Or.* 43.14 and 19.

[35] We should remember that both his father and Basil are presented elsewhere by Gregory as tyrants (*De vita sua* 345 and *Ep.* 63.6 respectively).

> Those who have a common Spirit, have also a common pathos; those who suffer equally, also believe equally. For one would not believe another regarding something that one has not experienced oneself; yet, the one who has the experience is more eager to give his consent; he is an invisible witness of an invisible *pathos*, an intimate mirror [οἰκεῖον ἔσοπτρον] of the other's form [μορφῆς ἀλλοτρίας].

Here pathos indicates the sufferings that Gregory and his audience undergo because of their common faith, their Orthodoxy; yet we also learn about the nature of pathos: the one who experiences it, we are told, is "an intimate mirror of the other's form". Pathos is, in other words, a mirroring of the other, the necessary condition for the appropriation (note the term: οἰκεῖον) of otherness.

That the interaction between self and other is presented in terms of reflection is not new; it has, for instance, biblical precedents (perhaps the most significant being Paul in 1 Corinthians 13.12). Yet, in order to show the various ontological models that the image of the mirror might have evoked at the time of Gregory, I turn to two passages chronologically close and perhaps influential to Gregory. These passages are dedicated respectively to (a) the relationship of the soul to the divine, and (b) the erotic passion of desire.

The first passage is taken from the dialogue *Alcibiades I*, attributed (at least in the times of Gregory) to Plato. The passage is cited here in its expanded version as it appears *only* in Eusebius of Caesarea's *Preparation to the Gospels* (*Alc.* 1 133b7-c19; c8-17 [ed. Denyer] = *Prep.* 11.27.5.7-14 [ed. Mras]: here placed in brackets)[36]:

> – *Socrates*: ... if the soul is to know itself [αὐτήν], it must look at a soul, ... and can we say that there is anything of the soul that is more divine than that to which knowing and wisdom are related? – *Alcibiades*: We cannot. – *S.*: This then of the soul is similar to [ἔοικεν] God and by looking at this

[36] On *Alcibiades I* and its authenticity see recently Denyer 2001: *Plato: Alcibiades*; on the manuscript tradition see Carlini 1964: *Platone: Alcibiade, Alcibiade Secondo, Ipparco, Rivali*; on the introductory place of *Alcibiades* in the curriculum of the Later Neoplatonists see Westerink 1976: *The Greek Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo I*, 15. On the lines in Eusebius see Favrelle 1982: *Eusèbe de Césarée, La Préparation Évangélique, livre XI*, 350-374; that Gregory had probably used Eusebius' library see Carriker 2003: *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea*, 26 and 311-312; on Eusebius and Plato see Carriker 2003, 98-108 (104 on *Alcibiades I*) and des Places 1982: *Eusèbe de Césarée, commentateur: Platonisme et écriture sainte*.

and coming to know all that is divine, namely both God and wisdom, one would thus come to know also oneself [ἑαυτόν] in the best possible manner. – *A.*: Apparently.
[– *S.*: So, just as there exist more lucid and clear and shining mirrors than the mirror of the eye, is not God too a more lucid and shining mirror than the best mirror that exists in our soul? – *A.*: So it seems, Socrates. – *S.*: Therefore, looking at God we would be using him as the best mirror [ἐνόπτρῳ] (even among human mirrors, namely when looking at the soul's virtue) and would thus see and come to know ourselves [ἡμᾶς αὐτούς] in the best possible manner. – *A.*: Yes.]
– *S.*: And we admitted that knowing oneself [αὑτὸν] is self-mastery [σωφροσύνην].

The second passage on erotic passion is by Himerius, Gregory's likely teacher of rhetoric in Athens. Himerius writes (*Or.* 10.79-90):

> But what caused the zeal toward the young boy? Every soul which has been recently separated from its heavenly dwelling continues to carry ... the vision of those delights which it saw, when it used to dance the blessed dance with the chariots of the gods. Thus, when it happens to see beauty here on earth, hidden within a divine soul, it swells with desire and rejoices with the vision ... Such is the pathos that I myself also suffered. For, seeing some image [εἴδωλόν τι] of myself appearing through his soul, as if in a mirror [ἐν κατόπτρῳ], I took pleasure in myself[37] and, therefore, I desired [ἐπόθησα] and sought his soul as if another self [ἄλλον ἐμαυτόν].

In both passages the image of the mirror is employed in order to explicate the nature of a relationship: in Eusebius' version of *Alcibiades*, the relation of soul to God,[38] and in Himerius, the love between an older man and a boy. And even if in the Platonic text the theme is temperance and in Himerius' Platonizing text the theme is erotic passion, the conclusion is the same: relationship to another generates self-reflection – self-knowledge in *Alcibiades*, self-desire in Himerius. As Himerius puts it, combining Pla-

[37] Colonna edits αὐτῷ; it seems to me that a reflexive αὑτῷ fits better the meaning of the passage.

[38] The accentuation of *self*-reflection in God in Eusebius' version is a logical *but not necessary* extension of what appears to be the original Platonic text (namely the text without lines c8-17). Notably the context of Eusebius' citation is a discussion of the eternity of the soul; what precedes it is a mention of Genesis 1.26: "Let us make man in our image and likeness".

tonic and Aristotelian models of friendship, what the self sees in the other is "another self".[39] Mirroring in Eusebius' "Plato" and in Himerius results in an affirmation of the self, *not* of the other. The mirror is thus conceived as an ontological space which is defined by the constraints of sameness, making it impossible for the self to say "I am another".[40]

Gregory's use of the mirror motif, however, has a rather different effect. Reversing the self-mirroring-in-the-other, Gregory wishes to identify his own self with a mirror that intimately reflects the other. The mirror is the site of the *other's* reflection (μορφῆς ἀλλοτρίας), a site which both *is* and continually *becomes* (ὂν καὶ ἀεὶ γινόμενον). From an ontological model of self-reflexivity and identity, the mirror is turned into an expression of receptivity, reflection-of-other and infinity.[41]

Becoming another

All the above themes are appropriately recapitulated in a Gregorian passage where self-representation, aesthetics of discourse, ontology and anthropology converge. It is that part of the funeral oration to his friend Basil where Gregory records his reaction to Basil's texts. Gregory writes (*Or.* 43.67):

> Whenever I take his *Hexaemeron* in my hands and carry it through my tongue, I commune with [γίνομαι μετά] the Creator and I learn and know the *logoi* of Creation and I admire the Creator more than before, using sight alone [ὄψει μόνῃ] as my teacher... When I read his discourses on the Spirit, I discover who the God is whom I have, and I speak openly the truth ... When I read his other exegeses ..., I am persuaded not only to proceed beyond the letter and look at the things above, but also to travel

[39] Cf. *Phaedrus* 255d5-6; Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1166a32, 1170b6, *Ethica Eudemia* 1245a30; on this see Price 1989: *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*, 56-102, esp. 87f., 110f., and 219f. Cf. the Pseudo-Aristotelian (?), *Magna Moralia* 2.15.7.3-8.4 (see Price 1989, 122 and Cooper 1980: "Aristotle on Friendship", in: Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, 301-340). See also Aubenque 1963: "Sur l'amitié chez Aristote", in *La prudence chez Aristote*, 179-183.

[40] As Brague 1988: *Aristote et la question du monde: essai sur le contexte cosmologique et anthropologique de l'ontologie*, 138-139, notes on Aristotle: "Je est un autre est pour Aristote une formule impossible"; see also Ricoeur 1992: *Oneself as Another*, 187-188.

[41] Cf. *Or.* 12.4 and *Carm.* 2.1.12.751-759, 2.1.36. For mirrors in Basil see e.g. *Homilia Dicta in Lacisis* 1444.20-21 (*PG* 31; scripture as mirror. I thank Philip Rousseau for this reference), *De Spiritu Sancto* 8.20.8-13 (ed. Pruche; the Son as mirror to the Father); on Gregory of Nyssa see Völker 1955: *Gregor von Nyssa als Mystiker*, 181f. and Harrison 1992, 116f. and 179f. and 183f. (on *active* receptivity: *proairetika docheia*).

further and to advance into the depth of the depth [εἰς βάθος ... βάθους], invoking abyss through abyss and finding light through light, until I reach the farthest peak. Whenever I encounter his *encomia* of the martyrs, I disregard my body and I am one with those who are praised and I am urged to martyrdom. When I converse with his ethical and practical discourses, I am purified in my soul and body, and I become [γίνομαι] a temple of God, capable of reception [δεκτικός], an instrument played by the Spirit ... through whom I am transformed and shaped and I become [γίνομαι] another from another [ἄλλος ἐξ ἄλλου], being altered [ἀλλοιούμενος] in a divine alteration [τὴν θείαν ἀλλοίωσιν].

The language of self-representation employed here by Gregory is consistent with the themes discussed above. The texts of Basil are presented as entirely lucid (or *enargetic*), enabling Gregory to use only his sight in order to access what is within the text. The text then proves to be an infinite depth, which turns the reader Gregory himself into a receptive instrument. This transformation is continuous; Gregory's insists on the verb *becoming*. Gregory *is* as well as *becomes*, and he *becomes another*. His ideal self is depicted as experiencing through translucent texts an infinite changeability.

Is this insistence on becoming, infinity, receptivity and change to be seen as Gregory's transcendence of the traditional Greek logic of sameness? The immediate answer must be a positive one. For, clearly several trends within Gregory's discourse are in sharp contrast to the dominant language of Greek ontology. This ontology is not only evident in the Stoic Marcus Aurelius and Gregory's contemporary thinkers, with whom I began, but also in the writings of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus (the three most significant for late antiquity philosophers), where adherence to being *vs.* becoming, to stability *vs.* change, or to sameness *vs.* otherness is often stressed. In Plato's *Republic*, for example, the ultimate paradigm is a God "not willing to alter [ἀλλοιοῦν] himself", a paradigm replicated by the most masculine [ἀνδρειοτάτη] soul which is "the least altered [ἀλλοιώσειεν] by external *pathos*"; ultimately, "*being*", as argued in the *Phaedo*, "remains the same [κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔξει] and never ... admits any alteration [ἀλλοίωσιν]" and as such "*being*" [τὶ ὄν, οὐσία] is said in the *Timaeus* to be superior to "becoming" [τὸ γιγνόμενον, γένεσις].[42] In Aristotle too, proper *alloiôsis* (a form of pathos) is defined as *pthora*, namely destruction,

[42] *Republic* 381c7-9 and 380e3-381c2; cf. 382e8-11; *Timaeus* 27d5-29c3; *Phaedo* 78c1-d7. For a case of appropriation of the *Timaeus* passage by a Christian author, see Eusebius *Praep. Evang.* 11.9.3.1-6; on Eusebius and Plato see n. 36 above.

while Aristotle's God is self-sufficient (*autarkês*), self-same and self-possessed.[43] In Plotinus' *Enneads* we read of masculinity where there is "no alteration [ἀλλοίωσις] or pathos", of being that supersedes becoming, of becoming as the "primal otherness" and of absolute unity, *i.e.* of no otherness, within self-contemplation.[44] Compared with such statements, Gregory's positive "becoming another" appears to be radical.[45]

Still, from another perspective, it seems that the answer to my question is negative. The primacy of sameness is operant in Gregory as well. I would remind readers of the Gregorian passages quoted at the beginning of this paper, where alteration and *becoming another* [ἄλλος γινόμενος] were considered to be *a defect* and not something positive (cf. also *Or.* 31.28). Gregory's attitude to gender categories is characteristic in this respect. Some

[43] On proper *alloiôsis* as destruction see *De Anima* 417b2-16 and the discussion in Burnyeat 2002: "De Anima II 5", *Phronesis* 47, 18-90 (I thank Edgars Narkevics for this reference). If there is change acknowledged in Aristotle, this is always conceived *within* the boundaries of nature and never beyond nature; cf. Blumenberg 1981: "'Nachahmung der Natur': Zur Vorgeschichte der Idee des schöpferischen Menschen", in *Wirklichkeiten in denen wir leben: Aufsätze und eine Rede*, 55-103. On the self-same God see Aubenque 1972: *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote: essai sur la problématique aristotélicienne*, esp. 497f. See also Brague 1988.

[44] See *Enneads* 3.6.2.59-60, 2.4.5.27-28, and 5.1.1.1-5. On "primal otherness" cf. Rist 1985: "The Problem of 'Otherness' in the Enneads", in: *Platonism and its Christian Heritage*, 82. On the motif of mirroring, but *within sameness* in Plotinus, see Armstrong 1988: "Platonic Mirrors", *Eranos* 55, 147-181. On self-contemplation see e.g. 5.3.4.4-14, 5.3.4.26-5.3 and 6.9.11.4-25; see also 5.3.8.8-55 and 5.8.4.4-11 on ontological transparency. Cf. Kristeva 1987: *Tales of Love*, 105-110 as opposed to Hadot [and Davidson] in Hadot 1993: *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*, 10-15 (cf. also n. 6 above). See also Beierwaltes 1980: *Identität und Differenz*; and Perl 1991: *Methexis: Creation, Incarnation, Deification in Saint Maximus Confessor*. On the *linguistic* primacy of *being* vs. *becoming* in Greek, see Kahn 1973: *The Verb 'Be' in Ancient Greek*, 194-227.

[45] Gregory was not alone in his project. Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa also speak of the combination of being and becoming, of positive alteration, and (in the case of Gregory of Nyssa) of the non-passionate pathos of divine eros. Basil, *Ep.* 8.7.62-66 (on God who both *is* and *becomes*) and 8.11.3-7 (on positive alteration), *Homily on the 44th Psalm* (*PG* 29; an excursus on the various types of alteration). Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum* (ed. Langerbeck) 23.9f., 27.7f. (on divine *eros* as *a-pathes pathos*), 185.20-186.12 (on becoming another from another), *Oratio catechetica magna* (ed. Srawley) 16 (on types of *pathos*), 21 (on positive alteration), *De Vita Mosis* 2.2f. (on *alloiôsis*), 2.175 (on the unity of being and becoming). That the Cappadocians were conscious of their paradoxical language see e.g. Basil, *Ep.* 38.4.87f. and Gregory of Nyssa, *De Vit. Mos.* 2.243 (on mixture of motion and stasis); also: *In Cant. Canticorum* 6.293 (ed. H. Langerbeck; Leiden 1960) (on the bottomless ever-flowing spring).

valorization of femininity is perhaps implicated in the valorization of pathos, but it is never explicitly stated in Gregory; by contrast, he directly praises masculinity.[46] Indeed, Gregory's insistence on pathos and alteration is framed along traditional Greek understandings of masculine subjectivity. For, openness to change, and even more so, receptivity, is at first glance a marginal, yet ever-present line of argument in the discourses that Gregory inherited. I mentioned above Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Origen and their acceptance of pathos in the reception of discourse. As Gregory transfers pathos from the reception of text to the ontology of the self, he comes closer to other androcentric discourses. Philo, for instance, refers to the *pathos* of inspiration and the superior type of *pothos* for God; and, above all, the multifarious Plato often flirts with the idea that Socrates, his intellectual hero, may experience *pathos* (*Phaedrus* 238c5-6 and *Timaeus* 19b).[47] To these we might add the discourse of what has been termed "the suffering self", a type of discourse that increasingly inhabited late antique rhetoric, from passion narratives and the novel to Aelius Aristides and Marcus Aurelius himself.[48] These discourses of the suffering male self desta-

[46] See the passages quoted above (p. 63f. and n. 14); on Gregory's "doubly potent masculinity which also encompasses feminine fecundity" see Susanna Elm's chapter (9) in this volume. On more explicit appropriation of femininity in a late antique and a Byzantine author (Synesius and Michael Psellos respectively) see Papaioannou 2000: "Michael Psellos's Rhetorical Gender", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 24, 133-146.

[47] I refrain here from examining how pathos and change were problematized in Greek drama, a discourse which lies at the heart of Platonic dialogical philosophy and may indeed have influenced Gregory's autobiography. For Plato see *Phaedrus* 238c5-6, *Timaeus* 19b, and *Theaetetus* 155d; cf., however, n. 26 above. For Longinus see *De sublimitate* 8. Lastly, for Philo see *De Migratione Abrahami* 34-36 (τὸ ἐμαυτοῦ πάθος, οὗ μυριάκις παθὼν οἶδα ... ὑπὸ κατοχῆς ἐνθέου) (ed. Wendland), *De Opificio Mundi* 70-71 (ἐνθουσιῶ, ἑτέρου γεμισθεὶς ἱμέρου καὶ πόθου βελτίονος), *De Somniis* 1.66-7, and *De Posteritate Caini* 13.5-17.1; also Misch 1950, II 497 and Louth 1981: *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys*, 18-35. On some possible links between Philo and "Longinus" see Russell (ed.), *'Longinus' On the Sublime*, xxix-xxx; cf. Heath, 398 n. 11. In mentioning Philo one may speak (and justifiably so) of Jewish and not Greek ontologies; still, for the purposes of this paper, with the term *Greek* I refer to a philosophical *language*, and Philo argues within that language.

[48] Perkins 1995: *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*; also, Shaw 1996: "Body/Power/Identity: Passions of the Martyrs", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4, 269-312. It should be noted that, in contrast to the authors discussed in these studies, Gregory's *pathos* is no mere acceptance of suffering *qua* pain, but of willed *receptivity* itself; *pathos* is elevated, as noted above, into the status of an ontological category. I also find that Shaw is too quick to discover gender subversion in the transformations of *pathos* terminology; cf. n. 45 above and n. 50 below.

bilize gender hierarchies, yet only by appropriating feminine qualities in the interests of masculinity.

This rather open-ended answer to my question suggests two things. First, it suggests that while theories of representation, cognition and ontology operate in a discursive continuum in Gregory of Nazianzus as well as in Gregory's intellectual interlocutors, there still exist several *un-reconciled* trends (regarding ideal texts, selves – and genders no less), which we might as well leave un-reconciled, if we are to do justice to a discourse that does not disguise its struggle with its own paradoxes. Secondly, it becomes clear that one must move beyond a search for radicality or uniqueness and take Gregory's exploration of otherness for what it is.

On a philosophical level, Gregory's response to the Greek obsession with *the same* is (siding with von Balthasar and his interpretation of cognition in Gregory of Nyssa) "intensification",[49] a *movement toward* rupture rather than true rupture. By this I mean that Gregory's images of the self – as an infinite mirror of the infinite other or as always becoming another in the infinite pothos for God – run into the danger of identifying the *infinity of desire* with *God* himself, that is to say, of identifying *the self-as-other* with *the Other*.[50] *This* is not a transcendence of the Greek monism of sameness, but rather an *intensification* of sameness; it is not a true infinity instigated by an absolute Other, but a "false infinity", an infinity of the same ever becoming other.[51] *If* there is a real break – to argue again with von

[49] Cf. von Balthasar 1942, 101 and 145; see also 10-19, 37-41 on becoming, 86-87 and 90-100 on the image of the mirror and *emphasis*. Daniélou 1944: *Platonisme et théologie mystique; essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de Saint Grégoire de Nysse*, is less critical. The *intensification* in models of ontology has its parallel in metaphors of gender; cf. Virginia Burrus' suggestion in her chapter (8) in this volume: "This is not to say that gender is transcended. If anything, gender is intensified in its very queering; it is also intensely eroticized" (p. 167).

[50] See how in Gregory's *Or.* 38.7 human never-ending desire (*pothos*) for God is paralleled by God's *infinite* incomprehensibility; and, for Gregory, our infinite desire is essential to our becoming gods.

[51] On "false infinity" cf. Derrida 1978, 312 n. 12. The ambiguity (becoming another *either* from being another *or* because of Another) is indeed present in Gregory's "ἄλλος ἐξ ἄλλου" (*Or.* 43.68) which may be interpreted as indicating a change that occurs *within* the self (from one self to another) or *from without* (toward another self because of Another). The latter interpretation may be supported in the immediate context by Gregory's claim that one becomes "receptive of the Spirit" and that the "alteration" is "divine" (namely instigated *by* the Divine); cf. Basil, *PG* 29.228.6-8 (ἄλλος ἐξ ἄλλου = another *by* another). Some pertinent discussion on Gregory's view regarding the image of God in man as the *desire* for God and the notion of infinite progress may be found in Telepneff 1991: *The Concept of the Person in the Christian Hellenism of the Greek Church Fathers: a Study of Origen, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. Maximos the Confessor*, 252-312.

Balthasar[52] – this is to be located in the attempts of the Cappadocians to make sense of their belief in an Incarnate and Triune God. In Gregory of Nazianzus specifically, it is Christ who is ultimately the model of a mixture of being and becoming (ὁ ὢν γίνεται), the One who takes on the form of the Other (μορφοῦται τὸ ἀλλότριον), and it is in reference to Christ and the Trinity that the problem of otherness is explored to its full extent.[53]

On a literary level, what makes Gregory so distinct among his pagan and Christian friends is the fact that his dynamic ontology (here monistic, there *pathetic*, elsewhere open to rupture) is applied more than ever to the author's own self: ontology is transformed into autobiography. It is not only Being and ethics that matter to Gregory, but self-representation, self-portrayal. Yes, it is in the field of ontological morality that Gregory proclaims that one should never "remain in the same [ἐν ταὐτῷ]",[54] yet it is in his autobiographical mode that openness to otherness reaches an unexpected peak. As a fundamental moment in the *De vita sua* makes clear, the moment in which Gregory declares his birth, Gregory's self is a self which from its very beginning "becomes another('s)".[55] With this self that toys

[52] von Balthasar 1942, 101-150.

[53] On Christ as *becoming* see *Or.* 38 paragraphs 3, 10, and 13 (cf. *Or.* 45.9). On Christ taking the form of another see *Or.* 30.3 (in this entire paragraph Gregory appropriates theatrical terminology). On personal (ἄλλος) but not natural otherness (ἄλλο) in the Trinity and natural (ἄλλο) but not personal (ἄλλος) otherness in Christ, see *Ep.* 101.21. Cf. *Or.* 30.6 and 42.15 as well as Basil, *Ep.* 38 *passim* on the mixture of otherness and sameness within the Trinity. On Gregory of Nyssa, see von Balthasar 1942, 101-150; cf. also Gersh 1978: *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: an Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition,* 286. Indeed, it is this aspect of the Cappadocian project that I wish to see as an approach to sameness that not only anticipates but also supersedes twentieth-century critiques of sameness; cf. n. 1 above as well as Ricoeur (335-341) who raises some seminal questions regarding Levinas' *hyperbole* of the Other, in which "a sort of reversal of the reversal" takes place and, to a certain extent, the Totality of Sameness is replaced by the Totality of Otherness. Cf. Peperzak, 8-12 (on the western outlook of Levinas' background) and also Chanter 2001: *Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Levinas* (on Levinas' own complicity with *masculine* discourse).

[54] *Or.* 44.8; Cf. *Or.* 4.124 as well as 2.14 and 43.66.

[55] *De vita sua* 87-88: εὐθὺς γίνομαι ἀλλότριος ἀλλοτρίωσιν τὴν καλήν. Interestingly Misch 1950:II, 458 saw in a passage where Marcus Aurelius (similarly to Julian, Plotinus and even Aristotle) proclaims that the ideal self *owns itself entirely* (11.1.1-2) a foretaste of Gregory, while Gregory often insists on his non-possession of his self (next to *De vita sua* 87-88 cf. *Ep.* 58.1 and *De vita sua* 194). As for the verb *becoming,* which is recurrent in the other two Cappadocians, it appears only in Gregory of Nazianzus in the first person singular, in reference to Gregory himself; cf. *Or.* 4.7, 24.5, 37.4, 39.14, 40.45; *Ep.* 6.8; *De Vita Sua* 1837-1839.

with images and reflections, expressions of otherness, Gregory intensifies the very possibilities of autobiography. As his self-representation suggests, the writing of selfhood can only take place at the expense of the constraint of sameness.

5

Skiagraphia: Outlining the conception of God in Gregory's *Theological Orations*

Edgars Narkevics

In the *Farewell Speech*, delivered shortly before his departure from Constantinople, Gregory of Nazianzus gives a recapitulation of his teaching (*Or.* 42.14-18). He calls it "an exposition" or "statement" of faith (*ho tês pisteôs logos*, 14.1-2) – an offspring of his philosophy of God (14.10-11). The recapitulation starts with the telling remark that "there is one concise proclamation of our doctrine (*hen ... kai syntomon programma tou kath' hêmas logou*), like a monument known to all (*hoion stêlographia tis pasi gnôrimos*)", namely, "this people" – his own Orthodox community in Constantinople (15.1-3). On Gregory's part, this is an eloquent description of the task of his rhetoric – to persuade, instruct, admonish, to let the Spirit write his speeches on the hearts of his audience (cf. *Or.* 1.6) and to correct the errors of writing maliciously imprinted by others (cf. *Or.* 40.44).

But where, one may ask, does Gregory explain the fundamentals of his doctrine, the theoretical presuppositions of his philosophy of God? Several times in his sermons, including the present one, he remarks that a liturgical or festive speech is not the right occasion for disputes, and that it is ridiculous first to teach and then to learn (*Or.* 42.18.12-15).[1] Nevertheless, Gregory's recapitulation ends with an allusion to his previous efforts at explaining and defending his position.[2] Most probably, he alludes to a series of speeches, known today as the *Theological Orations*.[3] And indeed, although in the *corpus* of Gregory's works there is a considerable number of

[1] Cf. *Or.* 40.44: "It is the time for teaching, not for controversy" (διδασκαλίας γὰρ ὁ καιρός, οὐκ ἀντιλογίας), see also *Or.* 41.10.

[2] *Or.* 42.18.9-11: "As for the proofs ..., they are already set forth many times by many writers, and by ourselves also with no little care" (τὰς μὲν δὴ μαρτυρίας ..., πολλοῖς τε λογογραφηθείσας ἤδη πολλάκις καὶ ἡμῖν οὐ παρέργως).

[3] See Bernardi 1992: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 42-43*, 88 n. 1.

so called "trinitarian passages"[4] presenting various facets of the precious offshoot of his philosophy,[5] only the *Theological Orations* contain elaborate argument which might help us understand its inception.[6]

However, the *Theological Orations* do not make up a treatise that states its basic assumptions, but a polished masterpiece of rhetorical art.[7] In this regard, it has been observed that Gregory mostly repeats, perhaps in a more picturesque and rhetorically subtle way, the previous patterns of post-Nicene doctrinal polemic.[8] Although in one sense this is true, such an evaluation fails to explain the *specific* traits of Nazianzen's position within the contemporary theological debate. Moreover, rhetorical subtlety is not only a matter of style and "forceful expression". It presupposes rather that the thought in the *Orations* is inseparable from the particular mode of its presentation. This point, I think, has an interesting implication: Gregory's conception of God is inseparable from the argumentative strategies by which it is formed. A remarkable feature of these strategies is that the *Theological Orations* display a comparatively high degree of detachment from the particular circumstances of their composition. In contrast to Basil's and Gregory of Nyssa's textual demolition of Eunomius' treatises, it seems that Gregory's arguments, without losing their specific target and polemical stance, are not so much involved in actual polemic as in imitating it, drawing a picture or map of a conceptual battlefield. Gregory has chosen to

[4] For trinitarian themes in orations, see *Or.* 6.22, *Or.* 18.16, *Or.* 20.5-7,10, *Or.* 21.2,13, *Or.* 22.12, *Or.* 23.6-8,10-13, *Or.* 25.16-18, *Or.* 26.19, *Or.* 33.16, *Or.* 34.11-12, *Or.* 37.18,22, *Or.* 39.11-12, *Or.* 40.41-43, *Or.* 41.8, *Or.* 42.15-17, *Or.* 43.30,33.

[5] Cf. *Or.* 37.18: "Imagine the Trinity to be a single pearl, alike on all sides and equally glistening".

[6] Cf. Gregory's announcement at the beginning of the *Third Theological Oration* (*Or.* 29.1): "let us bring forth to the light, like some noble and timely birth, our own notions about the godhead (ὑπολήψεις περὶ τῆς θεότητος)".

[7] I use Gallay (ed.) 1978: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 27-31*. Very helpful also is an older edition by Mason 1899: *The Five Theological Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus*. For quotations I have relied mostly on Lionel Wickham's English translation (though I have often modified it), in Norris 1991: *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*. Frederick Norris' introduction and commentary have been inspiring support for my study of Nazianzen's thought in many ways, but I am particularly grateful to him for turning my attention to Gregory as a philosophical rhetorician.

[8] Cf. Hanson's evaluation: "[Gregory of Nazianzus] differs in some points from Basil, but in none of great importance. His articulation of Trinitarian doctrine is clearer, rather more forceful and expressive than that of his friend, as becomes a great stylist, but that is all." See Hanson 1988: *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 714.

fight his adversaries on his own ground, reducing them to hypothetical positions on his conceptual map. It may seem unfair and certainly unpromising for a reconstruction of the real doctrines of his opponents.[9] Anyway, his approach has prominent precedents, not unfamiliar to Gregory. For instance, at the end of his first speech against Julian, which offers a sardonic overview of Hellenic mythology and morals, he opens the scene with a promise to show, as on a stage (*hôs epi skênês*), the character of Hellenic teaching, and then sarcastically explains his method by alluding to Plato's *Timaeus*: "so that we may watch their contrivance (*epinoia*) in movement, as Plato says about the city built in discussion".[10] This metaphor of a stage, I think, precisely depicts the method of discussion in the *Theological Orations*. They present a war of opinions concerning the proper conception of God, where the battle is set in motion by the argument, but where the stage, i.e. the compositional structure of the *Orations*, determines the scenery.

Although the full scope of Gregory's polemical armoury would emerge only from a thorough analysis of the whole web of his argument, I will focus on two representative episodes of the battle. In both of them, Gregory, by questioning the theological methods and concepts of his adversaries, outlines the very foundations of his own conception of God. A close study of these episodes will lead me to explore the theoretical basis of Gregory's conceptual minimalism and the hermeneutical purpose of his trinitarian doctrine.

The meaning of agennêton *I*

Let me begin by examining the use of argument by analogy in the *Second Theological Oration*, sections 7 to 9. Put concisely, the argument shows that God is not corporeal. It tries to achieve two objectives. The more general

[9] On Gregory's opponents, see the discussion in Norris 1991, 53f. For general background, see Hanson 1988 and Kopecek 1979: *A History of Neo-Arianism*.

[10] *Or.* 4.113: ἵν', ὅ φησι Πλάτων περὶ τῆς ἐν λόγῳ πόλεως, ἴδωμεν κινουμένην αὐτῶν τὴν ἐπίνοιαν. The phrase "the city built in discussion" comes from Plato's *Republic* (cf. 472e, 592a-b), but here Gregory alludes to Socrates' words at the very beginning of the *Timaeus* (19b-c): "I might compare myself to a person who, on beholding beautiful animals either created by the painter's art, or, better still, alive but at rest, is seized with a desire of seeing them in motion (εἰς ἐπιθυμίαν ἀφίκοιτο θεάσασθαι κινούμενά τε αὐτά) or engaged in some struggle or conflict to which their forms appear suited. This is my feeling about the city which we have been describing" (Jowett's trans.).

one, explained by Gregory himself (*Or.* 28.11), is to demonstrate that human knowledge is bound to the realm of bodies, so that God's being remains completely outside its scope. Thus he refutes the Eunomian claim to know God's essence, and prepares the ground for discussion of the pictorial nature of concepts (*Or.* 28.13). The particular target of Gregory's attack, though, is the Eunomian notion of "ingenerateness" (*agennêsia*).

In order to prove that the view about *agennêton* as a unique designation of the divine nature is incoherent, Gregory *shows* (*Or.* 28.9) that this notion is nothing more than the complex of arguments by which it is formed. It needs to be emphasized, however, that this is what he *shows*, not what he *says*. At first glance, it may seem odd that Gregory spends two sections (7-8) of the speech arguing for the obvious and uncontroversial opinion that God is not a body. And yet, the outcome of the discussion is not so trivial, since Gregory's strategy is to achieve his purpose in a roundabout way. A remarkable trait of his dialectical procedure is to deploy arguments not for their own sake, but rather as illustrations that convey his reasons for some more fundamental claim. So Gregory does not explicitly *state* that *agennêton* is a product of conceptual construction, but rather describes or even *depicts* this point through the analysis of another concept, namely, *asômaton*. When it becomes clear that the meaning of *agennêton* is to be explained by arguments analogous to those which demonstrate the bodiless nature of God, it helps to realize that the similarity in notions (in this case, *agennêton* and *asômaton*) is the similarity in their functions. Following these preliminary remarks, let us embark upon the main stages of the discussion.

A. God is not corporeal

(1) Gregory proposes two hypotheses: (i) What kind of conception of the divine will emerge, if the argument relies entirely on logical methods (*Or.* 28.7.1-4)?[11] (ii) What are the consequences for the conception of the divine if the argument relies (a) on the assumption that it is corporeal, or (b) on

[11] It is hard to determine precisely what procedure is meant by "logical method" (*logikê ephodos*). The term is not much used in ancient logic. Philoponus (*In An. Post.*, 235, ed. M. Wallies) writes that the task of *logikê ephodos* is "taking hold of definitions" (*lêpsis tôn hôrismôn*). Michael Psellus, commenting on Gregory's discussion in *Or.* 28.7 (*Theologica, Opusculum* 49, ed. P. Gautier), calls it "apodeictic or dialectical proof (*epicheirêsis*)". It seems that Gregory's choice of the term was due to its ironic connotation: *ephodos* means also "ascent", thus giving an opportunity to make fun of the Neo-Arian "way to God".

the assumption that it is incorporeal?[12] The first hypothesis probes the limits of dialectical approach in theological discourse by means of the second.

(2) If we assume that God is a body, then either (i) we shall contradict some other basic assumptions, e.g. that God is boundless (*apeiron*), limitless (*aoriston*), formless (*aschêmatiston*), impalpable (*anaphes*) and invisible (*aoraton*), since all these properties are incompatible with the notion of body (7.4-7), or (ii) we shall exclude them from the notion of God, thus making it senseless: "How could it be worth worshipping were it circumscribed (*perigrapton*)?" This last remark, I think, concisely explains the mentioned "divine properties" as different expressions of the most fundamental of God's attributes – unconfined perfection (7.7-9).

(3) Further, if God is a body, then it must be a compound of elements, and thereby under threat of disintegration and finally – total dissolution (7.9-11). For corporeality implies synthesis, and synthesis implies strife (or it is a "principle" of strife – *archê tês machês*), and strife implies separation (*diastasis*), which implies dissolution (*lusis*). But dissolution utterly contradicts the notion of God, if "God" means "the primal nature" (*prôtê phusis*). Therefore, by excluding dissolution, one thereby also excludes composition, and hence God is not a body (7.11-16).

We should note that these "dialectical proofs" or *epicheirêseis* not only refute the disputed claim. They also uncover certain presuppositions (*homologoumena*), which determine the thinking about God *as*, e.g. "the first and perfect nature". However, they do not aim to define the subject of analysis. The only thing a dialectical argument can do is to disclose inconsistencies and reestablish priorities among competing claims. So the opinion about God *as* "a body" has lost the battle. Yet Gregory's argument is not finished. After exploring the notion of body itself, it questions the further implications of the second hypothesis: how God as a body relates to other bodies? Now God's corporeality is played off against another *homologoumenon* – God *as* "a cause".

(4) If we agree that God "fills heaven and earth" (cf. Jeremiah 23.24) and "the spirit of the Lord fills the world" (cf. Wisdom 1.7), then such a body must either (i) occupy an empty space, so that all God's creation vanishes, or (ii) it must be a body in bodies, which is impossible (8.1-13).

[12] Conclusion that God is incorporeal: *Or.* 28.8; examination of the part (b) of the second hypothesis: *Or.* 28.10.

(5) Finally, if we expand the notion of body and assume that God is an immaterial "super-element" or "angelic body" above the rest of the corporeal realm, then either (i) it will encompass the world in the circular drift (8.14-18), or (ii) it will surpass even this bodily condition (8.25). In the first case, (a) it will belong to the world's order (e.g. it will be involved in the system of movements and will occupy space), and thereby (b) it will be only a relative causal factor (moving force), presupposing a prior mover *ad infinitum* (8.19-24). In the second case, either (a) God will not differ from angels (not to speak of the difficulty of figuring out the proper qualities of angelic bodies), or (b) God's body will transcend the conditions of angelic corporeality, endlessly becoming more and more sublime in the nonsensical abyss of our imagination (8.25-29). So we are left with the assumption that God is not a body (9.1). At this point Gregory postpones further discussion about "God as incorporeal" and reflects on the question of his first hypothesis.

B. Essential definitions *versus* dialectical assumptions

"To what result will closely-scrutinized argument lead you", Gregory asks his imaginary opponent, "if you put all your confidence in the methods of dialectical reasoning (*eiper holôs tais logikais pisteueis ephodois*)?" (7.1-2). Here is his answer: *Our reasons* for assuming that God is bodiless (*asômaton*), ingenerate (*agennêton*), unoriginate (*anarchon*), immutable (*analloiôton*), or incorruptible (*aphtharton*), neither represent, nor embrace God's being (*tês ousias parastatika te kai periektika*, 9.4-8). This is the crucial place where Gregory juxtaposes *asômaton* and *agennêton*, thus showing their similar status. To say that God is *asômaton* or *agennêton* is to express a certain consideration about God (*peri theou ê peri theon einai legetai*), namely, that he should not be conceived as a body or that his existence should not be conceived as being caused, but such propositions do not define God according to his nature (*kata tên phusin*):

> For what has the fact that he has no beginning, or his freedom from change and limitation, to do with his nature and underlying essence (*tên phusin kai tên hupostasin*)? No, the whole of the divine being (*holon to einai*) remains to be grasped, philosophically treated, and carefully examined by one who truly has the mind of God[13] and is more advanced in theory (9.8-13).

[13] An allusion to the "mind of Christ" in 1 Corinthians 2.16.

The last sentence quoted above is, of course, ironical. Imagine the Apostle Paul scrutinizing and putting in apodeictic syllogisms his experience on the road to Damascus or in the "third heaven". But it is, I think, more akin to "Socratic" irony, not mere ridicule. The serious point of the passage is to indicate the difference between dialectical questioning of one's *homologoumena* and scientific definitions. It should be clear that negative descriptions, such as *asômaton* or *agennêton*, do not directly pertain to God, since their function is to deny, not to affirm (9.24-33). But Gregory's claim is more radical than this. It is true that the pretentious role assigned to *agennêton* in the Neo-Arian disputes might have provoked him to criticize his adversaries' usage of negative terms. But, remarkably enough, when he demonstrates that dialectical assumptions are inadequate for clarifying the subject under discussion, he starts from *positive* statements and adopts them as a pattern for explaining negative ones (9.13-21):

> For just as to say "body" or "begotten" is not sufficient to present the thing clearly to the mind (*parastêsai te kai dêlôsai*) – you must also, if an object of thought (*to nooumenon*) is to be brought home to the mind (*parastêsesthai*) with adequate preciseness, give the designations their subject (*to hupokeimenon*), since this "corporeal", "begotten", and "mortal" being may be a man, or a cow, or a horse – so an inquirer into the nature of "being" (*tên tou ontos phusin*) cannot stop short at saying what it is *not*, but must also add to his denials a positive statement about what it is...

In other words, the condition for satisfactory designations is such that the designated subject must be known beforehand. The statement "God is ingenerate" does not clarify what God is, if the nature of the divine being is unknown, just as the statement "something is a body" does not clarify the subject of the statement, if it is not known that this "something" is, e.g. a horse.

In the previous discussion Gregory showed how the hypothesis of God's corporeality collapsed under the pressure from much stronger opinions, most of which were expressed negatively. The negative characteristics (including the "conclusive" one – *incorporeality*) could be subsumed under the rubric of *aperigrapton*: "God is unconfined" (7.9). Three more characteristics were uncovered: "God is the first nature" (7.13); "God is the first cause" and by implication – "God has no cause" (8.18-23). Now Gregory's radical claim is that such descriptions (both negative and positive) do not specify God's being. If the divine being is unknown, these statements take the form: "something which we call God is (or is not) such and such". Just

as the term "horse" corresponds to the definition of horse,[14] so, too, the designation of God's being ought to correspond to the definition of God, if "to know what is God" is something more than "to know what the word "God" means". But in order to define God, one must grasp the "whole of the divine being" (*holon to einai perilabein*), which seems quite problematical, to say the least.

Gregory's opponent may object that "ingenerate" is not just *a* designation of God but *the* designation – it is unique ("nothing else but God is ingenerate") and thereby it is a definition. Gregory would agree that only God is ingenerate (cf. *Or.* 29.11). But he would find it strange that God is nothing but ingenerate. If we assume, as we do, that God is unique, then all other designations of God will also have exceptional character: there are no other "first natures" or "primal causes". The opponent may argue further and say that all designations of a unique object have the same meaning, reducible to *agennêton*. This view is precisely what Gregory shows to be mistaken by examining the function of dialectical hypotheses. Our assumptions about God have various reasons which need not be incompatible but which are obviously not identical. They prompt us to think about God in certain ways: *as* the perfect being, *as* the first cause, etc. If the meaning of these descriptions is identical, then they lose their specific content and amount to the tautology: "That which is *agennêton*, is *agennêton*".

In sum, such designations as *asômaton* or *agennêton* (including positive descriptions such as, e.g. "the first cause" or "the perfect nature"), express certain *assumptions about* God's being (*peri theon einai legetai*), but do not state *what* is its nature (*kata tên phusin*). Logically, there are no privileged designations, if they do not correspond to definitions. Thus the very "analytical ascents" (*logikai ephodoi*) to the conception of God, if "closely-scrutinized", lead no further than the conclusion Gregory presses upon the adherents of dialectical debates: i.e. the position of those, who "put all their confidence in logical methods" believing at the same time that there is a privileged or even unique designation of the divine nature, is incoherent.

I have followed the path of Gregory's argument in order to disclose his strategy in refuting the claims of his opponents. The incoherence involved in their dialectical pretensions is demonstrated by the same tools that had

[14] This point has been discussed in ancient commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories*, e.g. in Porphyry's *In Cat.*, 60-61 (ed. A. Busse), English translation in Strange 1992: Porphyry, *On Aristotle's Categories*.

been used in the formulation of their claims, namely, dialectical hypotheses. But it is important to add: the claims themselves were *reconstructed* in the process of refutation. Although it is reasonable to suppose that Gregory in his attack had in mind a particular adversary, say, Eunomius, it seems that the aim of his strategy was not to target a particular opinion, but to undermine in general positions built on dialectical methods. As he did not directly confront the *ipsissima verba* of the opponents – their written texts or speeches – he had more freedom to dwell on the implications of their *thoughts*. This is, I think, a very effective strategy. Its rhetorical advantage is that unacceptable opinions are displayed in their most grotesque and unwelcome guise, without giving those who hold them the opportunity to accuse Gregory of mockery. Its philosophical merit is that it enables him to rise above "strifes of words"[15] and reflect upon the "things" (*ta nooumena, ta pragmata*) or the problems involved in dispute. In the case of the *Second Theological Oration*, one such "thing" is the meaning of "God".

C. God is incorporeal

And indeed, when we left Gregory's critique of dialectical hypotheses, it had reached a turning-point where the possibility of meaningful talk about God became highly suspect. The last part of his discussion deals with the consequences of the assumption that God is incorporeal (*Or.* 28.10). Up to this point, his analysis of dialectical syllogisms has shown that *asômaton* is nothing more than a designation of several reasons for particular view about God. Now these reasons are called into question. Ironically, it was assumed that the divine is *asômaton* in order to safeguard certain basic opinions about God, but, based on this assumption, every attempt at conceptualizing such opinions is doomed to *aporia*. If the divine is not a body, then, the argument goes, either we assume that it is somewhere or that it is nowhere, either in the universe or above it – all the same, it is completely impossible to conceive of any idea of incorporeal deity that would not crumble in the very act of its formation. Moreover, the act of conceptualization itself contradicts the assumption that God is unconfined, "for comprehension, too, is one form of circumscription (*hen gar perigraphês eidos kai hê katalêpsis*, 10.21-22)".

[15] Such "strifes" (*logomachiai*, 1 Timothy 6.4, *Or.* 27.1) are vividly described in *Or.* 27 (the *First Theological Oration*); see also *Or.* 32 ("On discipline in theological discourse").

What then does it mean to say that God is the "perfect nature" or the "first cause"? In section 13, Gregory mentions a range of scriptural names for "the first nature", including "Spirit" and "Word". If we think for a moment about their meanings, all of them turn out to be based on corporeal images of our experience. Therefore, they cannot represent the divine either separately, or taken together. Do our opinions about God have any basis, if "the divine is incomprehensible to human thought and totally unimaginable in its being" (11.11-12)?

Whatever this basis may be, Gregory has demonstrated that it lies outside the competence of dialectical methods. But he does not leave it at that. The whole discussion of *logikai ephodoi* is only part of his answer to the Neo-Arian challenge. For Gregory, the question about the meaning of *agennêton* is linked to a much more fundamental question: how to think (speak) about God? We can glimpse the outline of his answer from the broader context of his discussion.

D. Knowledge and belief

The analysis of dialectical methods substantiates Gregory's earlier claim that God is not an object of knowledge (*Or.* 28.4). This claim is further qualified by Gregory's remark that the divine nature is incomprehensible not in the sense that we could not understand *that* it is, but in the sense that we do not know *what* it is (*ouk hoti estin, all' hêtis estin*, 5.12). He then puts it in the form of a general distinction between knowledge of "*what* something is" and belief "*that* it is".[16] We should note that it is *not* a distinction between two types of knowledge, but between a certain type of *knowledge* and a certain type of *belief*. We have seen from his discussion of dialectical hypotheses that he explicates the first part of the distinction as a knowledge of essential definitions. However, he makes no explicit comments on its second part. All we are left with are hints for interpretation. I will now sketch them out.

(1) First, does Gregory suggest an *epistemic* distinction between "knowing the *essence* of x" and "believing that x *exists*"? Before exploring this question, just one remark – the terms "essence" and "existence" could be misleading, since both amount to the same "being" (*einai*) in Gregory's account. Let us look at two passages where the distinction is described:

[16] *Or.* 28.5.16-18: Πλεῖστον γὰρ διαφέρει τοῦ εἶναί τι πεπεῖσθαι τὸ τί ποτέ ἐστι τοῦτο εἰδέναι. In Wickham's translation (Norris 1991, 227): "Conviction ... of a thing's existence is quite different from knowledge of what it may be."

(i) "Both sight and the innate law (*phusikos nomos*) instruct us that God, the creating and sustaining cause of all, exists... (6.1-3)".[17]

(ii) "Yet, whatever we imagined (*ephantasthêmen*) or figured to ourselves (*anetupôsametha*) or our reason delineated (*logos hupegrapsen*) is not the existence of God (6.16-18)".[18]

Even though the Greek text of the first passage reads "God *and* (...) the cause of all", I believe that "and" here has an explicative function (meaning "that is" (i.e.)). If so, then the passage implies that "sight and the innate law" give *certain reasons* for the belief that God, *according to a certain description*, exists. The meaning of "God" in the sentence is "the creating and sustaining cause of all". Thus, "sight and the innate law" persuades us *to think about* God *as* "the cause of all". But the second passage shows that the thought *about* God's existence in no way *represents* it. The *existence* (or *being*) of God can be grasped neither in mental images, nor in verbal descriptions. In this sense, the belief that God is a cause does not imply any knowledge of "what it is for God to be a cause".[19] So we can say that there is an epistemic distinction between "knowing something" and "having opinions *about* something".

(2) Although such opinions are not on the level of knowledge, they have firm and sufficient reasons. One reason Gregory offers, immediately following the first passage quoted above, appears to be an "argument from design" (6.4-14): when we gaze at the beautiful arrangement and the orderly movement of the universe, our "innate law" (*phusikos nomos*) infers its founder (*archêgos*). Gregory himself calls it a "natural proof" (*phusikê apodeixis*, 6.16), and it seems that his point is to contrast the thought that moves from the visible world to its creator with "dialectical ascents" (*logikai ephodoi*, 7.2) that go round in circles in the futile play of opinions. Remarkably, in both cases some "belief" is involved: either it is conviction based on judgements of the "innate law" (5.17, 6.15-16), or it is reliance on the epistemic value of logical methods (7.2). So we can answer our initial question: do opinions about God as the "perfect nature" or the "first cause"

[17] Τοῦ μὲν γὰρ εἶναι θεὸν, καὶ τὴν πάντων ποιητικήν τε καὶ συνεκτικὴν αἰτίαν, καὶ ὄψις διδάσκαλος, καὶ ὁ φυσικὸς νόμος...

[18] Ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ τοῦτο εἶναι θεόν, ὅπερ ἐφαντάσθημεν, ἢ ἀνετυπωσάμεθα, ἢ λόγος ὑπέγραψεν.

[19] The same distinction, I think, is at work in "trinitarian" discussions where Gregory insists that the concept of the Son's generation does not presuppose any concept of "how he is generated"; see *Or.* 29.8. On the Spirit's procession, see *Or.* 31.8; cf. *Or.* 20.11.

have any basis, if God is not an object of knowledge? Yes, they do, because "natural proof" provides it, while dialectical argument gives no reasons for the opinions it treats.

(3) But is it really the "argument from design" that Gregory relies on? In order to reply, we need to reconsider what is meant by "natural proofs" (*phusikai apodeixeis*). There are two possibilities: (a) *natural proof* means an argument pertaining to the field of physics, distinct from the field of logic; (b) *phusikê apodeixis* is not a proof in the technical sense, but rather *evidence* or an *indication*. In this case it would be (i) an indication that helps the searching thought to find its object, or (ii) evidence in support of the searching thought. I believe that the second possibility is more convincing, since it corresponds better to the function of "innate law" (*phusikos nomos*). In the present section of Gregory's speech, the meaning of *phusikos nomos* remains uncertain, but he returns to the notion after he has refuted the Neo-Arian theological methods. In section 16, it is identified with "reason that is from God (*ek theou logos*), is implanted in all (*pasi sumphutos*) and is the first law in us (*prôtos en hêmin nomos*)". Presumably, it is a kind of force driving "thinking beings" (*logikai phuseis*) in their desire for the primal cause (*prôtê aitia*), enabling them to use their sight as a guide (*hodêgôi têi opsei chrêsasthai*) to discern the traces of the transcendent creator in the beauty and order of the visible world (*dia tou kallous tôn horômenôn kai tês eutaxias theon gnôrisai*, *Or.* 28.13). Now, if the "argument from design" is understood in Christian apologetics as proof of God's existence, then I would say that Gregory does not use it. The "problem" of God's existence is not the subject of his speech. The problem is that God is incomprehensible, and that, consequently, to *demonstrate* God's existence ought to be impossible and thus unreasonable. However, the created world, Gregory argues, *reminds* us of God the Creator,[20] so long as we are not "excessively senseless" (*lian agnômôn*) and do not refuse to follow "indications" (*phusikai apodeixeis*, 6.15-16) that are "cognate" with our "innate law", whenever the latter leads us back to our "first cause".

[20] Cf. a Platonic allusion in lines 8-13: "No one seeing a beautifully elaborated lyre with harmonious, orderly arrangement, and hearing the lyre's music will fail to form a notion (*ennoêsei*) of its craftsman or player, to return to him in thought though ignorant of him by sight." It is hard to say how much Gregory draws on this picture or whether he is aware of its source. If it is not merely a "rhetorical embellishment", but a significantly modified example of Plato's "recollection" (*anamnêsis*) argument in the *Phaedo* 73c-e (in Plato's example a lyre reminds one of the friend, in Gregory's – its craftsman or player), then it can strengthen my view that Gregory is not using the argument from design.

(4) As for the nature of the "*what/that*" distinction, I am tempted to take it not only as an epistemic distinction between knowledge and belief, but also as a rhetorical rule for different kinds of speech.[21] Although the distinction is a general one, it applies most effectively to the discourse on God, since here it is stretched to its limit. It is no longer a *real* distinction between two possible presentations of a subject (e.g. what are the indications for the case, and what is the case), but only a *conceptual* marker – the dividing line between meaningful and senseless presentation. For the question about the divine being is by no means a question of knowledge: "It is utterly impossible to comprehend (*perilabein*) so great a subject matter (*tosouton pragma*, *Or.* 28.4.8-10)".

Nevertheless, there is another sense of *whatness* in which God is not a premise of science but rather a task or "the ultimate goal (*to eschaton orekton*)" of all life and thought (*Or.* 28.6.25-26, cf. *Or.* 21.1). It presupposes a different type of knowledge, a kind of acquaintance: "We shall know even as we are known", Gregory concludes, echoing St Paul (*Or.* 28.17.7-9; cf. 1 Corinthians 13.12). This event will take place when "our mind and reason (*nous te kai logos*) mingles with its kin, and the image ascends to the archetype it longs for" (*Or.* 28.17.5-7). Moreover, it also presupposes a different type of belief – faithfulness *to* God that supplies the overall purpose for our beliefs *about* the divine.[22] In this sense, "to know God" is "to become God".[23] But again, "God as the goal of perfection" is not a description of *what it is to be* God. For Gregory, at least in the context of the *Second Theological Oration*, "the goal of perfection" is an explanation of *what* the divine being is *for us*, a pattern for how to think about it. Described within

[21] Cf. the distinction between *huparxis* and *idiotês* corresponding to *stochasmos* (evidence for the case) and *horos* (definition of the case) in post-Hermogenian *stasis* theory. See *Anon. comm. in librum Περὶ στάσεων*, 176-7 (ed. C. Walz) and Sopater, *Scholia ad Hermogenis status*, 30 (ed. C. Walz). It cannot be certain though whether Gregory, drawing his "what/that" distinction, had in mind the rules of forensic speech, but, interestingly, *stochasmos* (guesswork, supposition) of God's being is a theme in Gregory of Nyssa. See, e.g., his *Ad Eustathium*, 11 (ed. F. Mueller).

[22] Cf. *Or.* 29.21.13-14: "Faith, in fact, is what gives fullness to our reasoning" (ἡ γὰρ πίστις τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς λόγου πλήρωσις); see also *Or.* 28.28.41: "Faith rather than argument shall lead us" (Πίστις δὲ ἀγέτω πλέον ἡμᾶς ἢ λόγος). On the distinction between epistemic belief and faith, see *Or.* 31.6.18-20: "'Believing in' (πιστεύειν εἴς τι) is not the same thing as 'believing about something' (περὶ αὐτοῦ πιστεύειν). The first applies to God, the second to everything".

[23] For Gregory's doctrine of deification, see Torstein Tollefsen's chapter (13).

the biblical model of an "image/archetype" relationship, it demonstrates the possibility of discerning traces of an unfathomable God in the visible world.

The meaning of agennêton *II*

In the *Third Theological Oration* Gregory returns to the discussion of *agennêton*. Here, Gregory constructs the premises of his opponents from the claims they have made. It is a strategy of *reductio ad absurdum* proceeding in two steps. Firstly, Gregory shows what ought to be the premise if the claim pretends to be coherent. He then demonstrates that such a premise leads to absurd consequences.

Whereas in the speech on "theology" (*Or.* 28) the main issue was the meaning of "God" taken as a "common notion",[24] Gregory's argument in *Or.* 29 goes by the route of the "trinitarian" debate, or more precisely, it is focused on the notorious problem of the "Father/Son" relationship in the concept of God. It touches the very heart of the Neo-Arian dogma, according to which God's transcendent, indivisible, incomparable nature excludes any internal or external relations. Viewed from such perspective, the notion of a "begotten God" is a contradiction in terms. This is why Gregory in the heat of the discussion aptly though bitingly calls his opponent a "fan of ingenerateness" (*philagennêtos*, *Or.* 29.11, cf. *Or.* 23.7). The whole argument about *agennêton* comprises three sections (10-12) of the speech, but I will deal only with its *finale*, since it is here, I think, that the character of Gregory's polemical strategy most clearly comes to the fore. Moreover, this is the point where we can see in detail how wittily Gregory draws on Basil's work *Adversus Eunomium*.

A. Incoherence *versus* absurdity

At the end of section 12, just before closing the debate, Gregory briefly, almost as an afterthought, considers a rather peculiar consequence of the Neo-Arian position: if the term *agennêton* designates God's being, then it denotes a negative state or state of privation (*sterêsis*), and, as usual, he attributes this view to his imaginary opponent (*epi tais sais hupothesesi*, *Or.* 29.12.15-22). Now, if Gregory means Eunomius, it would seem that the

[24] Cf. *Or.* 23.9 where Gregory says that God is incorporeal according to our "common conceptions" (*koinai hupolêpseis*).

argument is misguided or mischievous, since it is well-known that Eunomius explicitly denies this view in his *Apology*.[25] "Ingenerateness" is not to be taken in the sense of privation, he says, because privatives are secondary to positive states. He clearly sees that such a view is absurd. And it is precisely into this absurdity that Gregory leads his opponent, who, I believe, might well be Eunomius himself. In fact, since the term *sterêsis* occupies a prominent place in Basil's polemic against Eunomius, it is very plausible that Gregory's intent here is to reduce Eunomius' line of reasoning to its self-destructive implications.

The strategy of his argument can be reconstructed as follows: (1) either the term does not refer to an inherent property in which case it cannot be said to be *kata phusin*, or it does refer to one; (2) the Eunomian position not only adopts the second option, but insists that *agennêton* is the *only* property of God's nature; (3) a property is a positive or privative state of the subject (i.e. *hexis* or *sterêsis*); (4) *agennêton* is a privative term; (5) therefore, on the Eunomian assumption, "God" is a privative state. For Eunomius, the only way to escape this nonsense would be to deny or qualify (4): that *agennêton* is a privative term. However, if he can neither explain how *agennêton* functions as a non-privative term, nor accept the absurd consequence, his position reveals itself as incoherent. Let us look at the background to Gregory's argument, to see whether Eunomius escapes this devastating dilemma.

(1) In his *Adversus Eunomium* Basil attacks the following statement from Eunomius' *Apology*:

> So then, if (...) "the ingenerate" is based neither on invention (*kat' epinoian*) nor on privation (*kata sterêsin*), and is not applied to a part of him only (for he is without parts), and does not exist within him as something separate (for he is simple and uncompounded), and is not something different along him (for he is one and only he is ingenerate), then "the ingenerate" must be ingenerate *essence* (*ousia agennêtos*).[26]

[25] See *Apology* 8.7-8 (ed. Vaggione 1987, 42): ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ κατὰ στέρησιν [ἀγέννητον]· εἴ γε τῶν κατὰ φύσιν αἱ στερήσεις εἰσί στερήσεις, καὶ τῶν ἕξεων δεύτεραι. In Vaggione's translation: "[God] is not such [i.e. ingenerate], however, by way of privation; for if privatives are privatives with respect to the inherent properties of something, then they are secondary to their positives" (Vaggione, 43).

[26] *Ap.* 8.14-18 (Vaggione 1987, 42, trans. 43).

Basil's answer is complex, since his critique is a running commentary on Eunomius' text, but I will extract from it only those points that are relevant to Gregory's argument:[27]

(a) Eunomius' conclusion, Basil says, would not follow by necessity, even if his proposal (*protasis*) that *agennêton* should be understood neither as *kat' epinoian* nor as *kata sterêsin* were correct. But since Eunomius proposes it as a strict implication, we will invert it and say: "As *agennêton* is predicated *kat' epinoian* and is a privative term (*sterêtikon onoma*), it is not *ousia* of God". Until he refutes this and strengthens his own premises, the conclusion he draws has no grounds (*Adv. Eun.* I.11.32-45).

(b) Before firing this *onus probandi* manoeuvre at his adversary, Basil has been trying hard to demonstrate that Eunomius' understanding of *epinoia* and *sterêsis* is very crude. In Eunomius' vocabulary, Basil has argued, *epinoia* is merely subjective fancy without any real signifying function, whereas the term should also comprise the sense of "concept", formed by reflective judgments *about* the object of thought.[28] Such judgments can be affirmative or negative statements (as in the case of *agennêton*), while negation itself has several functions, not only that of *privation* with its highly technical meaning, borrowed from Aristotle's *Categories* (*Adv. Eun.* I.9). In speaking about the divine nature, we use negative terms in order to prevent the intrusion of improper notions (*aprepeis ennoiai*) into our conceptions (*hupolêpseis*) of God (*Adv. Eun.* I.10.11-27). It does not matter how we describe privative terms – abstractive, prohibitive or negative (*aphairetikon, apagoreutikon, arnêtikon*), one thing is clear – *agennêton* does not designate what pertains to God (*ou tôn huparchontôn tôi theôi sêmantikon*), and it therefore cannot be a designation of God's being (*Adv. Eun.* I.10.36-45).

(2) Unfortunately, we do not know Eunomius' response. All the information we have is the second book of Gregory of Nyssa's *Against Eunomius*.[29] In so far as it is possible to reconstruct the general line of his answer, it seems that he did not modify his view of *epinoia* as "invention"

[27] *Adversus Eunomium* I.5-11 (ed. B. Sesboüé).

[28] *Adv. Eun.* I.5-8. Gregory's discussion of *agennêton* in *Or.* 28 proceeds along the lines of Basil's argument.

[29] The remainder of Eunomius' Second Apology (*Apologia Apologiae*) is discussed in Vaggione 1987: Eunomius, *Extant Works*, 79-87. For the reconstruction of Eunomius' reply to Basil's charge against his usage of *sterêsis*, see 114-115.

(or rather "verbal convention", expressing merely human fancies),[30] but he may have tried to elaborate the point about *agennêton* as a non-privative term (Gregory's point (4) above). For instance, he might have argued that *agennêton* is privative only in form, but not in meaning. That positive states (*hexeis*) are often expressed in privative terms (*sterêtikôs*), was a commonplace in later commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories*.[31] There was also at least one contemporary precedent, Porphyry, who mentions incontinence (*akolasia*), imprudence (*aphrosunê*), niggardliness (*aneleutheria*) and impiety (*asebeia*) as examples.[32] All of them designate some positive state (not a privation, but a perverted disposition), though it is true that these are not the examples Eunomius would have been likely to have chosen as proofs for his *agennêton*.[33] But even if Eunomius might have taken this route of argument, his case would fail for the following reasons:

(a) Although only a few privative terms that designate positive states can be converted into positive terms, most of these states can be explained or described positively (e.g. Basil and Gregory thought that they could explain *what it is* for Eunomius *to be impious*).

(b) This is not the case with "being immortal" or "being ingenerate", since all that they mean is "*not* being subject to death or birth". Therefore, both Basil and Gregory would say that such statements as "God is immortal" or "God is ingenerate" are true *kat' epinoian* (ought we to add – analytically?), but they do not tell us *what it is* for God *to be* immortal or ingenerate (i.e. they are not *kata phusin*).

However, I do not believe that Eunomius seriously considered the route

[30] *Ap.* 8.1-2: "When we say 'ingenerate', then, we do not imagine that we ought to honour God *only in name*, in conformity with *human* invention (*ouk onomati monon kat' epinoian anthrôpinên*)" (trans. Vaggione 1987, 43).

[31] See e.g. discussion of *sterêtika onomata* in Simplicius, *In Cat.*, 396.3-27 (ed. K. Kalbfleisch), cf. Elias, *In Cat.*, 237, 244 (ed. A. Busse). Simplicius reports that Chrysippus was the first to notice the difference between various meanings of *privative* terms (= *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* II, Fragm. 177, ed. J. von Arnim). Eunomius, I think, would have been interested in Chrysippus' example of one privative term without privative meaning – "immortal' (*athanaton*). Obviously, it is not said of someone who *lacks* mortality, or is mortal but *cannot* die.

[32] Porphyry, *In Cat.*, 136-137 (ed. A. Busse).

[33] Cf. *Or.* 29.10.16-18 where Gregory compares the distinction *gennêton*/*agennêton* with *sophon*/*asophon*. Without doubt, this was a reference to his opponent, but this ingenious gesture also shows that both intelligence and lack of intelligence are *properties* (*huparchei*), i.e. *positive* states.

of argument suggested by Basil's critique. In all likelihood, he had already chosen the way of religious fundamentalism coupled amazingly with audacious dialectical methods.[34] Presumably, his defence of *agennêton* was based on a particular understanding of scriptural authority: (i) that the notion of God is revealed in scripture; (ii) designations of God, such as "*ho ôn*" in Exodus 3.14 or the "only true God" in John 17.3, by extension amount to the notion of *agennêton* (cf. *Apology* 17.1-3); and (iii) the content of the notion is not different from its referent.

So much for considerations about how Eunomius *might* have answered Basil's challenge. As to what concerns his *actual* reply, something of it is preserved in Gregory of Nyssa's quotation:

> Some have said that God is ingenerate by virtue only of the privation (*sterêsei*) of generation, but we say, in refutation of these, that neither this word nor this idea is in any way applicable to God.[35]

It seems a strange declaration, given Basil's outspoken refusal to accept Eunomius' "Aristotelian" interpretation of *sterêsis*. But if we recall Basil's *onus probandi* move, it becomes clear that Eunomius is now hitting back. Basil concluded the discussion of *sterêsis* by inverting Eunomius' conditional: "As *agennêton* is predicated *kat' epinoian* and is a privative term (*sterêtikon onoma*), it is not *ousia* of God". The expression "privative term" in Basil's sentence, I think, was chosen not only for the argument's sake, but also to tease Eunomius, stressing once more his narrow-minded approach to negative terms. Thus Eunomius rhetorically, though, perhaps, not very elegantly, puts the label of his "*kata sterêsin*" bugbear on Basil's *sterêtikon onoma*.

Of course, we cannot know whether Gregory read Eunomius' *Second Apology*[36] and whether his argument was a direct response to Eunomius' scoffing remark, but from Basil's exchange with Eunomius, we can better understand Gregory's motive for turning to the controversial *sterêsis* issue.

[34] For Eunomius' view on language, see Gregory of Nyssa's discussion in his *Contra Eunomium* II.195-293 (ed. W. Jaeger).

[35] *C. Eun*. II.565 (ed. W. Jaeger, 391.23-27): εἰπόντων τινῶν στερήσει γεννήσεως εἶναι τὸν θεὸν ἀγέννητον, ἡμεῖς ἐπ' ἐλέγχῳ τούτων μηδαμῶς ἁρμόζειν τῷ θεῷ μήτε τὴν φωνὴν ταύτην μήτε τὴν ἔννοιαν εἴπομεν. English translation by M. Day in NPNF, Vol. V, 307.

[36] It is very likely that Gregory was informed nevertheless about the main points of Eunomius' reply. For his reading of Basil's polemical works (*antirrêtikoi logoi*), see *Or.* 43.67.

Against this background his argument becomes conclusive: whatever Eunomius might think or declare, until he has explained the function of *agennêton*, it remains a privative term, and if it is not taken *kat' epinoian*, he inevitably destroys his own argument. Therefore Gregory is fully justified in saying (*Or.* 29.12.18-22):

> ... since positive states are prior to privations, and privations take away positive states, not only must the Son's essence be prior to the Father's, but it must be destroyed by the Father, *on your presuppositions* (*epi tais sais hupothesesi*).

B. *Epinoia*

In fact, Gregory's attack upon the Eunomian position requires a reconsideration of the concept of *epinoia*. What in Basil's answer was deliberately left open, is now put forward in a most uncompromising manner: there are no longer two options for Eunomius, i.e. *either* (1) to explain the function of the term "ingenerate", *or* (2) to reformulate the function of *kat' epinoian* predications, because the first task necessarily implies the second. As we have already seen from the discussion of dialectical methods in the *Second Theological Oration*, Gregory's argument follows exactly the logical sequence that links these two tasks. A designation, be it by a positive or negative term, he argued, is not tied to its object but denotes a particular *thought* about it. If the object is God, then designations of God's nature cannot denote thoughts that express *knowledge*, i.e. definitions of the object, but they nevertheless correspond to considerations that express *beliefs* about the object, including, of course, beliefs about the object's nature. Such beliefs may be true or false, unsound or well-founded, more or less comprehensive. Therefore, there is no ground for Eunomius' objection that *epinoiai* do not refer to objects. They certainly do, but not in the superficial sense of stitching on labels.

Furthermore, one designation may denote *various* thoughts, so that its meaning would depend upon the context where it is used. For instance, in section 10 of the present speech (*Or.* 29.10) Gregory observes that *agennêton* can simply mean "something uncreated" where it refers to the divine nature, delineating the basic distinction or "ontological gap" between the creator and creatures (*mê ektismenon kai ektismenon*, 10.9), but in the context of the "Father/Son" relation (*to gegennêkos kai to gegennêmenon*, 10.11) it connotes a *different* thought and designates a distinctive mark of the Father without undermining the idea of a common nature, expressed in the metaphor of parental kinship (*hautê gar phusis gennêtoros kai gennê-*

matos, tauton einai tôi gegennêkoti kata tên phusin, 10.12-14).[37] To be precise, in Gregory's text the term "distinctive mark" (*idiotês*) appears two sections later, where he explains his previous argument about the various meanings of *agennêton*. The fact that the Father and the Son have the same being, he says, does not imply that they must have all characteristics in common. Hence, *agennêton*, even if it is a convenient description of the Father, does not necessarily refer to the divine nature, but may well denote a particular idea about the Father, without even touching on the question of God's being, or, to put it in Gregory's own words (*Or.* 29.12.7-8):

> Surely it is clear that when we are looking, if look we can, for what God's being consists in, a distinctive mark (*idiotês*) must be left out of account.

This is said just a few lines before the passage that concludes his discussion of *agennêton* with the curious view of "Father" as being a privative term. And, I think, it is not a coincidence, but a further sign of Basil's influence that in the next section (13.13-22) Gregory introduces the notion of *epinoia*. The same account (*logos*), he says, applies to all individuals of the same species (*eidos*), and whatever shares the account is also properly called by the same name.[38] For instance, all individuals of the species of horse are called horses because they share the same essential characteristics. So it is also in the case of God. However, speaking about designations of God, he avoids the parallelism with horses and does not say that all individuals of the species "God" share the same account. What he does say (13.17-22) is that

> ... there is one essence of God, and one nature, and one name (*klêsis*), even though the designations (*onomata*) are distinguished along with the distinct concepts (*epinoiais*), and whatever is properly (*kuriôs*) called by this name is God, and whatever he is in his nature (*kata phusin*) is a true name for him, granted that for us the truth lies in things (*pragmata*), not in words (*onomata*).

[37] The same consideration applies to the designation "the first cause" (*hê prôtê aitia*). In *Or.* 28.13 it denotes "God" as a common notion, whereas in trinitarian contexts (e.g. in *Or.* 31.14) it means "God the Father".

[38] This is certainly an Aristotelian explanation of *synonyms* (see *Cat.* 1a) – a theory of predication that was widely discussed in the contemporary commentaries of Aristotle's *Categories* (see Porphyry, *In Cat.*, 68, ed. A. Busse; Dexippus, *In Cat.*, 20-22, ed. A. Busse), nothwithstanding Gregory's emphatic claim that it is "our doctrine" (*hêmeteros logos*, 13.13-14).

First of all, I should point out the ambiguity in the passage. Gregory says that there is one name (*klêsis*) for God and that "whatever is properly called by this name is God" (*ho men an kuriôs legêtai, touto kai einai theon*). But it is not clear whether this implies that the name of God is "God".[39] So I see two possibilities of interpretation: (i) in the strict sense, the proper name of God's essence is unknown,[40] since we do not possess the proper account (i.e. essential definition) of God's being; or (ii) in a wider sense, the "name" of God can be any designation of God's being, but in each case it is "one name", because its referent is one and the same divine nature, albeit under different descriptions. I think neither of these interpretations contradicts Gregory's understanding of *epinoia*, but I prefer the second reading, because it fits the context of the passage better.[41]

Although Gregory's language is loose, he clearly admits that the pattern for thinking about the essence of God and the essence of horse is the same. It has often been observed that for the trinitarian doctrine this would be disastrous.[42] But such worries are misplaced. They arise from the confusion of conceptual distinctions (*epinoiai*) with metaphysical or ontological items. The view that "God" denotes a "generic", or more precisely, "spe-

[39] In Wickham's translation the ambiguity is settled: "Whatever is properly called 'God' is God". (Norris 1991, 253).

[40] Cf. *Or.* 30.17.1: "The divine cannot be named" (Τὸ θεῖον ἀκατονόμαστον).

[41] Gregory introduces this piece of semantic theory in order to refute a certain understanding of *homonymy* which might possibly be ascribed to Eunomius. The purpose of the argument, as we could see from the following section (14), is to show that there are only two options concerning the divinity of Christ: either he is God, or he is not.

[42] See e.g. John McGuckin's discussion of the *Third Theological Oration* in McGuckin 2001: *St Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, 294 n. 352. McGuckin, rightly criticizing Meijering's irrelevant approach to Gregory's trinitarian doctrine, remarks that the divine being as a generic class is "an idea which Gregory of Nyssa introduces in his treatise to Ablabios, and it is often used in Western theologians as a model of the trinity, but it is never sustained in Gregory of Nazianzus, who regards it as logically defective." However, in his survey of *Or.* 29, McGuckin disregards section 13, and therefore does not notice that on the logical issues of the concept of God the two Gregories maintain exactly the same position. It is described not only in Gregory of Nyssa's *Ad Ablabium*, but also in a more detailed and logically perspicuous way in his *Ad Graecos* and in Basil's *Epistle 38*. The view that the so-called "human analogy", used by the Cappadocians in their explanations of the trinitarian model, implies the concept of generic unity and is thereby under the threat of tritheism, is a misunderstanding with an established tradition in patristic studies, well documented in Zachhuber 2000: *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa: Philosophical Background and Theological Significance*, 118-122.

cific" unit does not entail the view that it is a term for the class of several gods, because the "thing" (*pragma*) denoted by the name "God" is not a "natural kind", but an *epinoia* of God's essence that describes a certain characteristic of "what is proper to God's being" – *to idion tou theou*.[43] However, it is important to note the function of the term "God" in the passage quoted above. In the previous section (12.9-12) Gregory had explained the difference between *agennêton* and *theos*, saying that "God", in contrast to "ingenerate", is a relative term (presumably, similar to "Lord").[44] He now takes the term not in the sense of a *particular* concept, but as a representative *klêsis* of the whole set of concepts that express, each in its own way, "what is proper to God". This set of concepts, describing the *essential* attributes of God, constitutes the account (*logos*) of God's being,[45] and whatever shares these attributes is properly called "God", even though it may also have its own "distinctive mark" (*idiotês*), described within a different set of concepts. In fact, it *must* have its own distinctive mark, since otherwise the subject of the predicate "God" would remain unqualified. Gregory identifies the subjects that share the "account of God's being" by the scriptural names "Father" and "Son". So the task of "the distinct *epinoiai*", mentioned in the quoted passage, is to describe the *peculiar* attributes of the Father and the Son, thus clarifying the meaning of these scriptural names.

Consequently, the distinction between the two types of description, corresponding to two sets of concepts, explains how *agennêton* as a peculiar attribute of the Father can shape a conception of God without denoting God's essence, and how the Son can be properly called God without being called *agennêton*.

[43] Cf. *Or.* 29.11 where Gregory, contending with the Neo-Arian understanding of *agennêton*, admits that God's essence is characterized by that which "belongs to God alone (*monou theou*), and is proper (*idion*) to him", but denies that *agennêton* is a unique and exclusive qualification of God's being.

[44] The same thought reappears in *Or.* 30.18 where Gregory considers several designations of the divine essence, namely, "God", "Lord" (*kurios*), and "Being" (*to on*), and concludes that only the latter is "most proper to God" (τὸ δὲ ὂν ἴδιον ὄντως θεοῦ, 18.15-16).

[45] I believe that in the present passage Gregory's "account" of God's nature is what he elsewhere calls the "account of being" or "account of the godhead": τὸν τῆς οὐσίας λόγον, εἴτουν θεότητος (*Or.* 39.11). The term – *logos tês ousias* – has a prominent place in the trinitarian treatises of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. See e.g. Basil's *Adversus Eunomium* I.5 (520A), 19 (556A-B) and Gregory of Nyssa's *Ad Graecos* (ed. F. Mueller). On the term *logos tês ousias* in Basil's *Epistle 38* and its Aristotelian background, see Zachhuber 2000, 71-73.

The trinitarian scheme

I have examined the semantical basis of Gregory's theological position in the hope that the two examples of his argument will offer a sufficiently clear outline of his conception of God and its polemical context. We saw how his critique of the Neo-Arian theological views in *Or.* 28 led to reflection on the functions and limits of dialectical methods, on the distinction between knowledge and belief, and on the very possibility of discourse on God. Remarkably, this last issue involved a theory about concepts of God as interpretations of the signs of God's being. So, already in *Or.* 28, there are hints that the meaning of "God" has a hermeneutical dimension.

The second argument in *Or.* 29, starting from a *reductio ad absurdum* strategy and drawing on Basil's notion of *epinoia*, sketched out a theory of designations as the conceptual basis for the trinitarian doctrine. In this particular discussion, however, Gregory was focusing on the two subjects of the godhead, i.e. "God the Father" and "God the Son". But to think about these subjects, as I have already noted, is to think about the meaning of their scriptural names. This explains what frame of reference is implied in Gregory's statement that "the truth for us lies in things, not in words" (*Or.* 29.13.21-22, cf. *Or.* 6.22). The number of "things" that qualify for the predicate "God" is neither deduced from metaphysical speculations about the structure of the universe, nor found in dialectical analysis of "common notions". It is a hermeneutical assumption that sustains a certain reading of scripture. For Gregory, such an assumption was his understanding of the Nicene Creed, expressed in the trinitarian formula: "the three are one in the godhead, and the one is three in the distinctive marks".[46] Now let us consider how Gregory's theory of *epinoia* can illuminate his hermeneutical approach to the conception of God.

A. The one and the three

We can see the two types of description at work in sections 18-19 of the *Fourth Theological Oration* (*Or.* 30) where they are used as exegetic tools that help Gregory to prepare his discussion of the "titles" (*prosêgoriai*,

[46] *Or.* 31.9.17-18. For Gregory's understanding of the Church's tradition as an "historical continuity of interpretation of Scripture", and the hermeneutical function of his trinitarian doctrine, see Noble 1988: "Gregory Nazianzen's Use of Scripture in Defence of the Deity of the Spirit", *Tyndale Bulletin* 39, 101-123.

16.24) or "names" (*klêseis*, 19.24) of the Son.[47] The essential attributes represent the distinctive characteristics of the divine nature.[48] Their designations, Gregory says, are common to the godhead (*koina theotêtos ta onomata*, 19.20), and thereby common to all of "those which are the godhead",[49] but each of them also has its own distinguishing mark, represented by some peculiar attribute and designated by its "proper name" (*idion onoma*). The name of the unoriginate (*anarchou*) is "Father". The name of the unoriginately generated (*anarchôs gennêthentos*) is "Son". But the third, which has ingenerately proceeded or is proceeding (*agennêtôs proelthontos ê proiontos*), is named "Holy Spirit" (19.20-23). These discriptions carefully delineate the common and individual features of the three subjects.[50] Each

[47] This is of course an Origenian topic of biblical exegesis. Origen's treatment of the Son's "names" as the designations of various "things" said about Jesus, is the most probable background for the controversial notion of *epinoia*, so hotly debated in Basil's exchange with Eunomius. For Origen's use of *epinoia*, see his exegesis of the Gospel of John, e.g. *In Jo.* I.9.52-53, X.4.15, X.5.21, X.37.246 (ed. C. Blanc); XIX.6.39, XIX.20.131, XIX.23.158 (ed. E. Preuschen). It is a remarkable consequence of Gregory's theory of designations that he opens the discussion of the Son's names with an explanation of the name "Son" (*Or.* 30.20.1).

[48] Cf. *Or.* 30.18.16: τὸ ἴδιον τοῦ θεοῦ. Although Gregory reserves the term *idiotês* for descriptions of the distinctions within the concept of God, it may well be used also to distinguish God from the created realm. For example, in *Or.* 30.8.9-10 the names that indicate the difference between divine and human natures in Christ, are said to be distinguished along with concepts of the natures (ἡνίκα αἱ φύσεις διΐστανται ταῖς ἐπινοίαις, συνδιαιρεῖται καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα). It almost echoes the sentence in *Or.* 29.13, but this time *epinoiai* mark out not a *particular* distinction within the concept of one and the same being, but an *essential* distinction between two different natures. That *idiotês* could mean both the distinctive marks of "those who are God" and the distinctive mark of the divine nature as such, see e.g. Basil's *Epistle* 38.5 (ed. Y. Courtonne) where ἡ κατὰ φύσιν ἰδιότης is distinguished from what he calls αἱ τῶν ὑποστάσεων ἰδιότητες. Cf. the expression ἡ τῆς θείας φύσεως ἰδιότης in *Adv. Eun.* I.18 (553A), and ἡ ἰδίοτης τῆς οὐσίας that distinguishes the Son from creatures in *Adv. Eun.* II.10 (589B).

[49] I take this phrase from the famous passage in *Or.* 39.11.19-21: "For the godhead is one in three, and the three, in which is the godhead, or more precisely, *which are the godhead*, are one" ("Εν γὰρ ἐν τρισὶν ἡ θεότης, καὶ τὰ τρία ἕν· τὰ ἐν οἷς ἡ θεότης, ἤ, τό γε ἀκριβέστερον εἰπεῖν, *ἃ ἡ θεότης*).

[50] The features the Son and the Spirit share with the Father are qualified by the adverbs *anarchôs* and *agennêtôs*. Cf. the economical discription of the distinctive marks in *Or.* 41.9: "All that is the Father (*scil.*, all essential attributes that express the Father's being), belongs to the Son, except the ingenerateness. All that is the Son belongs to the Spirit, except the generation" (Πάντα ὅσα ὁ Πατήρ, τοῦ Υἱοῦ, πλὴν ἀγεννησίας. Πάντα ὅσα ὁ Υἱός, τοῦ Πνεύματος, πλὴν τῆς γεννήσεως).

of the three, in its own way, leads thought into the depths of the divine being.

Thus, Gregory's distinction between two types of description is a clue to his interpretation of the Nicene term "consubstantial" (*homoousion*). This appears in one of Gregory's most famous trinitarian formulae where he says: "When I conceive of any one of the three, I think that it is the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part escapes me".[51] In the light of his theory of *epinoia*, we can see two logical reasons for the miracle he describes: (i) each one of the three can be conceived in respect of its divinity, i.e. through its essential attribute; (ii) any divine attribute represents the nature of all three.

Moreover, it illustrates Gregory's impressive economy with technical terms. Since the names "Father", "Son" and "Holy Spirit" denote three distinct ways according to which God is revealed in scripture and thereby in the apostolic tradition of the Church, a reflection upon the scriptural meaning of "God" finds three objects of thought (cf. *Or.* 31.5) and thereby three objects of faith and worship (cf. *Or.* 31.14). But there is no need for further qualification of their particular natures, because all "the three" are one God. They may be called *hypostases* or *persons* but with a proviso that these terms mean nothing more than "distinctive marks" (*idiotêtes*) of "the three". In fact, it does not matter what terms are used, if they express the same thought (*Or.* 39.11, cf. *Or.* 29.2, *Or.* 20.10). This conceptual minimalism enables Gregory to "walk along the royal middle road" which lies not only between the heresies of Sabellianism and Arianism, but also between dissenting parties of the Nicene community (*Or.* 42.16). In the *Farewell Speech*, Gregory addresses various Pro-Nicene factions as a mediator (*diallaktês*) who brings them back "from the letter to the sense", in the same way as he reconciles the Old and New Testaments (*Or.* 42.16.30-32).[52] He reminds his audience that the divine *hypostases* are not to be understood as three "beings" (*ousiai*), whereas the divine *persons* (*prosôpa*) should not

[51] *Or.* 40.41.19-21: "Οταν ἕν τι τῶν τριῶν φαντασθῶ, τοῦτο νομίζω τὸ πᾶν καὶ τὴν ὄψιν πεπλήρωμαι καὶ τὸ πλεῖον διέφυγεν. The translator of *Or.* 40 in the series Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers was certainly perplexed when he wrote the following commentary to these lines: "If I think of One Blessed Person, the other Two are not in my mind", NPNF, Vol. 7, 375.

[52] Ὁρᾶτε οἷος ἐγὼ διαλλακτὴς ὑμῖν, πρὸς τὸν νοῦν ἄγων ἀπὸ τοῦ γράμματος, ὥσπερ τὴν Παλαιὰν καὶ τὴν Νέαν. It is notable how Gregory combines the two tasks – exposition of the Nicene "mind" and interpretation of scripture – in one hermeneutical project.

be imagined as an anthropomorphic compound with three faces. To avoid such unwelcome connotations, Gregory prefers the term *idiotês* with its simple and unambiguous function.[53]

The *purpose* of fixing the distinctive marks, however, cannot be uncovered within the framework of the theory of designations. Although the latter supplies Gregory with conceptual resources, it does not form a trinitarian concept of God. So far, the distinction between two types of attributes has elucidated only one aspect of the unity of the divine persons. It helped to demonstrate how *each* of "the three" is identical with the two others without losing its otherness. But this kind of explanation has still not touched upon the crucial part of the trinitarian doctrine, i.e. it has not shown how the three distinct ways in which God is revealed in scripture is *one* event, or, in other words, how *all* "the three which are the godhead" constitute *one* divine being. In this regard, the distinctive marks of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are described not only to distinguish the persons, but also to outline their correlation. The very names "Father" and "Son", as Gregory observes, are relative terms (*Or.* 29.16). In the *Fifth Theological Oration* he returns to this same point concerning all three divine persons. Their difference in "revelation" (*ekphansis*), he says, or their difference in "mutual relationship" (*pros allêla schesis*) has caused the difference in their names.[54] The proper distinction of the persons, therefore, is a prerequisite for the conception of their threefold relation.

The main features of the trinitarian conception may be described as follows:[55] (i) there is one nature and creative power, one will and mind of the triune God (these are the essential attributes of the Trinity), (ii) but the Father is the origin of the godhead (*archê tês theotêtos*, *Or.* 2.38, *Or.* 20.6, *Or.* 23.8); (iii) the Son and the Spirit, each in its particular way, are from the Father, but they are not after him (*ex autou all' ouk met' auton*, *Or.* 29.3, *Or.* 25.15, cf. *Or.* 31.14), i.e. they are not inferior to the Father, because from him they have their equality with him (*Or.* 40.43). The order (*taxis*) of

[53] *Or.* 42.16. Similarly, in *Or.* 21.35 Gregory praises Athanasius for his ability, in the trinitarian conflict between Eastern and Western bishops, to rise above quarrels about the difference in the words (*hypostases* versus *persons*) and stick to their identical meaning (*nous*).

[54] *Or.* 31.9.3-5: τὸ δὲ τῆς ἐκφάνσεως, ἵν' οὕτως εἴπω, ἢ τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσεως διάφορον, διάφορον αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν κλῆσιν πεποίηκεν.

[55] Cf. Gregory's description of the divine monarchy in *Or.* 29.2.

reciprocal relation unfolds the concept of the divine being.[56] The structure of this order I call the "trinitarian scheme". And since it reflects the communion of "the three", found through a particular reading of scripture, it is a hermeneutical scheme.

B. *Skiagraphia*

Finally, I will outline what I believe is one of the central points in Gregory's trinitarian doctrine – the distinction between a hermeneutical scheme and the various ways in which it may be represented. As I will try to show, it corresponds to the distinction between the intended meaning of scriptural texts and different ways in which it is expressed.

In the introductory part of my paper I mentioned Gregory's metaphor of the stage, which was used to depict the procedure of his polemical argument. In the discussion of *agennêton*, this stage turned out to be a coherent set of defensive strategies. The consistency of these strategies in refuting various objections to the Nicene dogma, demonstrated the logical soundness of Gregory's theological position. Remarkably, the same metaphor reappears in the *Fifth Theological Oration*, though in a different context. Now Gregory sets the stage for contemplating the meaning of his own concept of the Trinity. In order to explain the notion of consubstantial divine hypostases, he says (*Or.* 31.11.1-11, 16-19):

> What was Adam? A creature of God. What was Eve? A portion of that creature. And what was Seth? The offspring of the pair. (...) Were they of the same substance? Yes, of course they were. It is agreed, then, that things with a different individual being can be of the same substance. I say this, not so that I might attribute creation, partition or any property of a body to the godhead (...), but so that I may contemplate in these, as on a stage, the objects of thought (*epi de toutôn theôrôn, hôs epi skênês, ta nooumena*). For it is not possible to trace out any image that exactly conveys the whole extent

[56] The relationship of the divine persons (*pros allêla schesis*) is characterized as the order (*taxis*), known only to the Trinity in *Or.* 23.11, cf. *Or.* 6.22. For the full scope and theological importance of Gregory's trinitarian doctrine, see McGuckin 1994: "'Perceiving Light from Light in Light' (*Oration* 31.3). The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Gregory the Theologian", *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39:1, 7-32. As McGuckin points out, the order of mutual trinitarian relation "is not only the very constitution of the Trinity but its whole meaning ... – the archetype and paradigm of God's economy of salvation" (29). To my knowledge, McGuckin's article is the best exposition of Gregory's trinitarian thought ever written.

> of the truth. (...) Will you then give up your contention (...), having grasped the possibility of our conception (*tês hemeteras hupolêpseôs*) by means of examples from the human race?

The first notable thing here is that Gregory's illustration is not meant to prove his standpoint, but to demonstrate its "possibility", i.e. it shows how to conceive of the trinitarian scheme. Therefore, the "conception" (*hupolêpsis*) in this passage implies both the concept and the way it is formed. The metaphor of the stage illustrates the rule of conceptualizing images, i.e. extracting from them the logical structure of representation. However, the structure itself is not reducible to its representations.[57] Even though our concepts are of a pictorial nature, as Gregory argued in *Or.* 28.13, their meanings are not images. This is why Gregory says that "it is not possible to trace out any image that exactly conveys the whole extent of the truth". All images are inadequate, because (i) they contain various irrelevant features and because (ii) they are partial. Nevertheless, the meanings of concepts are expressed and found only in images. So the example of Adam, Eve and Seth, when properly conceptualized, represents a pattern of relation, which is analoguous to the formal structure of the trinitarian scheme. More precisely, it represents only a certain *aspect* of that structure (how "things with a different individual being can be of the same substance"). The way in which a conceptual image is formed is like constructing a "stage", i.e. establishing its meaning, but the rule of construction is set by the *purpose* of representation. In this case, the purpose is to show that the notion of the consubstantial divine hypostases is neither illogical, nor implausible.[58]

[57] *Pace* Demoen who, discussing this passage, neglects the difference between a conceptual scheme and its representations. See Demoen 1998: "Metaphor and the Ancient Trinitarian Debate: Analogical Language in the Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen", in: Biebuyck, Dirven & Ries (eds.), *Faith and Fiction: Interdisciplinary Studies on the Interplay between Metaphor and Religion*, 137-153, 147. In this otherwise valuable and stimulating article, Demoen misses Gregory' point in two ways: (1) he thinks that the trinitarian concepts, such as "consubstantiality", are metaphysical notions (146); (2) he wonders why Gregory "who is conscious of the innate limitations of ... linguistic tools", nevertheless "holds strongly to the dogmatic formulation of a Trinitarian construction", finds it inconsistent, and calls Gregory's position "the paradox of a rhetorical theologian" (148).

[58] Logically, the example works, even if one does not believe the biblical story, but then, of course, it would not be an example "from the human race".

Similarly, in the final sections of the *Fifth Oration* (*Or.* 31.31-33), Gregory explores a series of trinitarian images,[59] comments on their inadequacies, and finally repudiates all of them, as they cannot fix his thought on the meaning they are supposed to convey, so that he can contemplate the object which they are supposed to represent (33.7-8).[60] It may seem that Gregory's critique of the trinitarian images suggests their total abandonment. However, he immediately adds: the images can be useful, though, but only if one takes from them a certain aspect (*hen ti labôn tês eikonos*) and discards the rest (33.8-10). This remark may clarify the intent of Gregory's critique. His purpose is not to strip the concept of Trinity of its representations, but to underline the difference between the meaning of the concept and limited modes of its expression. Although images cannot convey the whole meaning, they outline its manifold aspects. However, since they only *depict* the formal structure of the trinitarian relation, but do not *explain* it, Gregory calls them "deceptive shadows", inadequate to express the truth (33.11-12).

The meaning of the trinitarian scheme, as I have argued, is found in the reading of scriptural texts which reveal the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The hermeneutical function of the scheme is to coordinate various scriptural representations of this relationship into a coherent conception of the divine being. It helps the reader to "go beyond the letter" and see the "hidden beauty" (*apotheton kallos*) or "inner meaning" of the scriptural message (*Or.* 31.21). But it is not reducible to any particular representation of God. In the same way as the images of the trinitarian scheme are misleading or senseless, if we do not understand their purpose, so particular biblical "proof-texts" cannot make sense of scripture.[61]

There is a remarkable passage in the *Fourth Theological Oration*, where

[59] He depicts the relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit as that of 1) a source, a spring, a river (31.6-14); 2) the Sun, a beam, light (32.1-9); 3) the oscillating manifold reflection of a sunbeam (32.10-33.10).

[60] Καὶ ὅλως οὐδέν ἐστιν ὅ μοι τὴν διάνοιαν ἵστησιν ἐπὶ τῶν ὑποδειγμάτων [note the resemblance with ἐπὶ σκηνῆς] θεωροῦντι τὸ φανταζόμενον. The object of representation (*to phantazomenon*), as in the previous case, is the trinitarian concept of God.

[61] This explains the sequence of Gregory's argument for the divinity of the Holy Spirit in *Or.* 31. At first he refutes objections to the trinitarian doctrine, then explains his hermeneutical principles, and only at the very end of the speech (*Or.* 31.29) adduces an impressive concatenation of biblical proof-texts. For more details on Gregory's strategy, see Noble 1987.

Gregory, speaking about the biblical names of "unnamable God", describes the hermeneutical task of theology. It runs as follows (*Or.* 30.17.11-16):

> Outlining (*skiagraphountes*) what pertains to him (*ta kat' auton*) out of that which is [said] about him (*ek tôn peri auton*),[62] we collect from various places a faint and feeble image. And our noblest theologian is not one who has discovered the whole – our earthly shackles do not permit the whole – but one who has got a fuller insight than another and gathered in himself a richer picture (*indalma*), shadow (*aposkiasma*), or whatever we call it, of the truth.

This is said about the hermeneutical competence of a theologian, whose task is to outline the inner or intended meaning of scriptural texts – a meaning which neither "lies behind" the texts, nor can be "extracted" from them, because the truth, as Gregory says, is not in words or images. The outline of God's being – *skiagraphia* – refers to the source that inspired the authors of scripture.

Another place where Gregory describes the task of a theologian is the *Farewell Speech*. After the "statement of faith" in which he recapitulates the central tenets of the trinitarian doctrine, Gregory, who never wrote any biblical commentary or exegetical treatise, declares that he "follows the divine scriptures, removing from the way of the blind the stumbling blocks contained along them" (*Or.* 42.18). We can see how he performs this task on the stage of the *Theological Orations* and elsewhere in the exegetical parts of his speeches.[63] But the stage itself is built in reflection on the trinitarian scheme, which empowers Gregory to cast aside "images and shadows" and "persuade others to worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit", "resting upon few words" (*Or.* 31.33).[64]

[62] As the passage is about the names of God, I believe that *ta peri auton* may be found in "various places" of scripture, where these names appear. Notably, the distinction between *ta kat' auton* (the features of God's nature) and *ta peri auton* (the thoughts about God's nature), which we saw in the discussion of the Neo-Arian dialectical methods, is now used in an exegetical context.

[63] For a wider insight into Gregory's exegetical practice, see the articles by Gallay 1984: "La Bible dans l'œuvre de Grégoire de Nazianze le Théologien", in: Mondésert (ed.), *Le monde grec ancien et la Bible*, 313-334, and Norris 1997: "Gregory Nazianzen: Constructing and Constructed by Scripture", in: Blowers (ed.), *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity*, 149-162.

[64] I wish to express my gratitude to Jostein Børtnes, Tomas Hägg and to all participants in the *Aesthetics and Cognition* project. I would also like to thank Žanete Narkevica and Arnis Ritups-Redovics for their very helpful remarks on earlier drafts of this paper.

6

The Cappadocians on the Areopagus

Samuel Rubenson

O, Athens, the glory of Greece, o Athens, the golden city of learning (*Or.* 43.14). To Gregory of Nazianzus there is no city like Athens, no question of a Jerusalem overshadowing this city of gold. To Gregory it is the city of aesthetics, the city of rhetoric, the city of erudition. His description, in his oration on his friend Basil of Caesarea, of their life together in Athens is the longest extant passage on contemporary Athens in the entire literature of the Patristic period. No other Patristic writer seems to have bothered about Athens as a city of their own time. The bulk of references to Athens in Patristic literature is, not unexpectedly, to classical Athens; moreover, most are found in the writings of the apologists, from Tatian to Eusebius of Caesarea.[1] Not even Basil of Caesarea, who spent seven years in Athens together with Gregory, shows any greater interest in his extant writings in the Athens of his own day. Thus, Gregory of Nazianzus is a significant exception. In his oration on Basil, but also in several other texts, Gregory makes clear that Athens was more than a positive symbol of learning and eloquence; he remembers his years in Athens as a happy time representing an intellectual climate he would miss for the rest of his life.

But alas! Gregory's description of his and Basil's life in Athens reveals far more about the relations between himself and his friend, and more specifically about the way Gregory wanted them to be known at the time of the oration, than about the Athens of their youth. It is Basil, not Athens, that he wants his audience and readers to remember. What he tells us about Athens is actually not a great deal. Most of it relates to rituals connected with the arrival of new students, and various forms of academic competi-

[1] Tatian is the first Christian author who explicitly discusses classical Athens, especially in his *Orationes ad Graecos*. The most extensive discussion on Athens is found in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*. For a brief survey of images of Athens in early Christian literature, see Lau 2000: "Athen I (Sinnbild)", *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, Ergänzungsband I, 656-668. Eusebius' use of Athens is analyzed in Breitenbach 2003: *Das „wahrhaft goldene Athen". Die Auseinandersetzung griechischer Kirchenväter mit der Metropole heidnisch-antiker Kultur*, 27-125.

tion that serve as a backdrop for Gregory's description of his relationship with Basil and his defence of their years in this pagan stronghold. He makes clear that he enjoyed Athens, its intellectual climate and his own studies, that he was fairly successful there and that he left reluctantly after almost ten years in his "golden city of learning".[2] But he does not give us the name of any of his teachers, does not say a single word about his specific studies, and provides no solid information about the schools of the "university of Athens" or the life in the city in his own time.

Moreover, Gregory's passages on Athens are remarkably reticent on the Church. In his oration on Basil he only vaguely refers to a Christian community when he mentions the two venues open to them, the preferable one leading to "our sacred buildings and the masters there", and the other leading to "the secular teachers" (*Or.* 43.21).[3] This is the only direct reference to Christianity in Athens in the writings of the Cappadocians. There is no reason to question that both Gregory and Basil related somehow to a Christian congregation in Athens, and that they attended the gatherings of the Christians, but neither seems to have regarded Athens as important for their Christian formation, or the Church of Athens as the focus of their stay there. When, later in life, Gregory thought about Athens and his relationship with the city, the Church did not come to mind. It is true that Gregory refers in two of his poems to his experience of a storm on his journey to Athens as a turning-point in his religious life. But it is difficult to draw any conclusions about what that experience really meant to Gregory during his days in Athens, or in what way it influenced his views on Athens itself.[4]

Unfortunately our sources about Christians in Athens at the time of the Cappadocians outside their own writings are very few and inconclusive.[5]

[2] Basil's and Gregory's time in Athens is described in Gregory, *Or.* 43.14-24. Other references to his stay in Athens add little information about Athens itself.

[3] τοὺς ἱεροὺς ἡμῶν οἴκους καὶ τοὺς ἐκεῖσε διδασκάλους ... τοὺς ἔξωθεν παιδευτάς.

[4] *Carm.* 2.1.1.308-322 and *Carm.* 2.1.11.124-210. The storm at sea is also mentioned in *Or.* 18.31. In his impressive monograph on Gregory's intellectual career John McGuckin argues, on the basis of the poems, that Gregory was baptized in Athens and began to live a life devoted to Christ there, but the evidence is very thin. See McGuckin 2001: *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, 35-83. McGuckin's conclusions about Gregory's baptism are questioned by Breitenbach 2003, 157f. and idem 2005: "Der unfreiwillige Hochzeitgast. Die verschiedenen Berufungen des Gregor von Nazianz und das Schweigen über seine Taufe", in: Harwardt & Schwind (eds.), *Corona Coronaria. Festschrift für Hans-Otto Kröner zum 75. Geburtstag*, 31-48.

[5] Actually the only other source that directly refers to Christians in Athens in the mid-fourth century is Eunapius, *Vitae philosophorum et sophistarum*, pp. 485-493, where Eunapius tells the story of Prohairesios, the Christian sophist, on whom Gregory wrote an epitaph (*Epitaph.* 5).

From Eusebius we know that there had been bishops in Athens, and thus a Christian congregation, long before the mid-fourth century,[6] and also that several Christian intellectuals of the second and third centuries were connected with Athens.[7] Athens did send a bishop to the council of Nicaea in 325.[8] But in general we have to admit that Athens is almost non-existent as a contemporary city in early Christian literature. Historically, Athens does not seem to have played a part in the development of the early Church. For the Christian writers, Athens was a city that belonged to history, a city that represented the pagan past.

Turning to the archaeological and epigraphical evidence, we find that Christian symbols begin to appear in the minor arts in the mid-fourth century, and that there are a few tombstones with Christian inscriptions most probably belonging to the fourth century. Their simplicity has led scholars to the conclusion that the Christians of Athens came from the lower classes. But there were also probably Christians who adhered to the traditional artistic patterns, thus remaining indistinguishable from their pagan contemporaries.[9] In any case there can be no doubt that it was only in the fifth century, and only gradually, that Christianity made a discernible impact in Athens and that a Christian cult began to replace a pagan cult. There is no evidence of any church having been built in Athens before the fifth century. Despite repeated imperial decrees, pagan shrines remained intact until the mid-fifth century and were only later converted into churches. The first church to be built was, moreover, most probably built by imperial decree: the Tetraconch in the library of Hadrian, erected by order of the empress Eudocia in the second quarter of the fifth century.[10]

[6] In addition to Dionysius, mentioned in Acts 17.34, whom Eusebius, *Historia Eccelsiastica* 3.4.11, describes as the first bishop of Athens, he also mentions the bishops Publius and Quadratus (*Hist. Eccl.* 4.23.2-3).

[7] A number of Christian apologists are linked by Eusebius to Athens, the most important being Origen, whose stay in Athens is mentioned in *Hist. Eccl.* 6.32 and also referred to in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.30. For details see Hällström 1992: "Origen in Greece", *Byzantium and the North*, 17-32.

[8] For details see Frantz 1965: "From Paganism to Christianity in Athens", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 19, 187-205, at 188, and Breitenbach 2003, 66f.

[9] For an analysis of the evidence, see Frantz 1965, 187-205, at 189, and Frantz 1988: *The Athenian Agora*, Vol. XXIV: *Late Antiquity: A.D. 267-700*, 68. For a critical review of this view see Fowden 1990: "The Athenian Agora and the Process of Christianity", *Journal of Roman Archeology* 3, 494-501, at 500f., although Fowden's arguments refer mainly to the fifth century.

[10] Frantz 1988, 72f. and Fowden 1990, 501.

Meanwhile, only one Christian funerary inscription, and no Christian public inscriptions, can safely be dated before the latter part of the fourth century.[11] Judging from the epigraphic and archaeological evidence, the Christian congregation in Athens at the time of the Cappadocians was most probably an insignificant group, largely made up of immigrant working-class people. Even if it cannot be ruled out that Christian students such as Basil and Gregory, and a Christian teacher such as the sophist Prohairesios, played important roles in the local Church, there is no evidence to support this.[12]

To Basil and Gregory, Athens was, of course, not simply a city in which they had both been students. It was also the Athens of a glorious past. They were both well acquainted with the ancient fame of Athens and the connotations the city's name brought with it even in late antiquity. Both appeal in several of their writings to stock images of Athens, and Gregory in particular draws repeatedly on Athenian history and mythology.[13] For them, as well as for any educated person in the fourth century, Athens was primarily the city of classical literature. The long tradition of speeches in praise of Athens, the *laudes Athenarum,* was still vital in the fourth century, as exemplified by the Emperor Julian and the Athenian rhetor Himerius, a rival of Prohairesios and a close associate of Julian.[14] But although their Christian tradition could offer nothing comparable, they did have in their Scriptures a passage about Athens, the story about the Apostle Paul's visit there and his interrogation by the council of the Areopagus.[15] This passage seems to

[11] Trombley 1993: *Hellenic Religion & Christianization c. 370-529*, Vol. I, 284 ff., and Sironen 1994: "Life and Administration of Late Roman Attica in the Light of Public Inscriptions", in: Castrén (ed.), *Post-Herulian Athens: Aspects of Life and Culture in Athens A.D. 267-529*, 15-62, at 17-37.

[12] I find it hard to agree with McGuckin 2001, 62 that "It cannot be doubted that Prohairesios was a significant figure in the life of the Christian Church at Athens" or that Gregory "is referring to Prohairesios' place in the official life of the Athenian Church" in his comment on "our sacred buildings and the masters there". If Prohairesios, who according to Eunapius was the king of rhetoric in Athens in the 360's and to whom, according to both Eunapius and Libanius, a statue had been erected in Rome, had been a prominant figure and teacher also in the Church, it is hard to explain why he is not mentioned in any Christian sources and why no text of his is preserved. See Eunapius, *Vitae Philosophorum* 492, Libanius, *Ep.* 278.

[13] For images of Athens, see Lau 2000, 657-662 and Breitenbach 2003, 127-256. For the mythology, see Pyykkö 1991: *Die griechischen Mythen bei den großen Kappadokiern und bei Johannes Chrysostomos*.

[14] See Barnes 1987: "Himerius and the Fourth Century", *Classical Philology* 82, 206-225.

[15] Acts 17.16-34.

have been of little interest to Christian writers before the fourth century, but is the most frequent reference to Athens in the writings of Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom.[16]

As related by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, the story is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it must have been familiar to any Christian who regularly attended Church or read the Bible. Secondly, it is the only passage in the Bible that deals with Athens; and thirdly it is the only passage in the New Testament where we learn of an encounter between Christianity and a Greek pagan tradition, quite unconnected with a Jewish setting. It is actually the only passage in the New Testament where any Greek philosophical schools are mentioned, indeed the only passage that refers to philosophers. It is also one of the few places where Greek authors are quoted, in this case even a religious statement. Moreover, it reports a speech by Paul that makes ample use of primarily Greek philosophical ideas in order to support a Christian message. The account (in Acts 17.16-34) has been by far the most widely discussed passage in the Acts of the Apostles in our own day, and also the one considered most problematic by many exegetes. In his recently published commentary on Acts, Jacob Jervell concludes that the story is a "Fremdkörper sowohl im Neuen Testament als auch in den lukanischen Werken. Das gilt sowohl inhaltlich, theologisch, als auch formal, also sprachlich und stilistisch. Wir haben keine Parallele".[17] According to Jervell the passage could be omitted from Acts without disturbing the overall structure or purpose of the text. Consequently, the main focus in the study of this passage has not been its position in the overall structure of Acts, but rather how it represents the emergence of the encounter between pagan philosophy and cult on the one hand and, on the other, the Christian faith, or even how it has become the key text for Christian mission in general. Among others, Christian Gnilka, in his book on the Church fathers and ancient culture, takes as his point of departure Acts 17 and its interpretation by the missiologist Paul Hacker.[18]

Furthermore, Paul's encounter with the Athenian philosophers seems,

[16] Paul's visit is referred to in a few passages in Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and his speech is alluded to in certain other writers such as Justin the Martyr, Irenaeus and Cyprian. See Fiedrowicz 2002: "Die Rezeption und Interpretation der paulinischen Areopag-Rede in der patristischen Theologie", *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 111, 85-105.

[17] Jervell 1998: *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 452.

[18] Gnilka 1984: *ΧΡΗΣΙΣ. Die Methode der Kirchenväter im Umgang mit der antiken Kultur*, Vol. I: *Der Begriff des „rechten Gebrauchs"*, 26-29.

at least to us moderns, to have been a startling anticipation of what the Cappadocians were actually doing. This is also the conclusion drawn by Jaroslav Pelikan in his magisterial *Christianity and Classical Culture*, based on his Gifford lectures 1992-1993.[19] In his thorough discussion of the Cappadocian Fathers and of their notion and use of classical philosophy, Pelikan uses Acts 17 as a key text for what he calls "Natural Theology as Presupposition" in the theology of the Cappadocians. The only problem is that we look in vain, in his 333 pages, for a discussion of the text of Acts and its use in the writings of Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa.

Since both Basil and Gregory had lived in Athens, were familiar with the council of the Areopagus and, no doubt, had had long discussions with Stoics and Epicureans, their use of Acts 17 ought to be of special interest. It could, of course, be argued that the image of Athens in Acts 17 bore little similarity to the Athens of Gregory and Basil. But contrary to what has sometimes been maintained, it is evident that the Council of the Areopagus was still functioning in the middle of the fourth century,[20] and that the philosophical traditions were still alive and represented as educational possibilities, even if the official chairs were then vacant.[21] The story in Acts would also have made perfect sense in the Athens of the fourth century, a very conservative place, proud of its ancient institutions and almost wholly identified with intellectual competition and academic debates. The purpose of this paper is to examine how the Cappadocian fathers made use of Acts 17, and to suggest some reasons why they did not attach the same importance to the text as modern commentators do and as we perhaps think they ought to have done.[22]

[19] Pelikan 1993: *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism.*

[20] See Geagan 1967: *The Athenian Constitution after Sulla*, 31-61.

[21] For the continuation of the schools, see Frantz 1988, 17f.; Hadot 2003: "Der philosophische Unterrichtsbetrieb in der römischen Kaiserzeit", *Rheinischer Merkur* 146, 9-71; Dillon 1979, "The Academy in the Middle Platonic Period", *Dionysius* 3, 63-77, and the introduction to the Budé edition of Proclus: Saffrey and Westerink (eds.) 1968: *Proclus, Théologie Platonicienne*, Vol. I, xxv-xlviii.

[22] Breitenbach briefly discusses the place of Acts 17 in his analyses of the image of Athens in the Cappadocian fathers (pp. 216-226). To him the references to Acts 17 in the Cappadocians are just another use of Athens as *exemplum*, and the negative description of the Athenians in Acts 17.21 a reason for using the Athenians of Acts as a derogatory comparison for debates in their own days.

Basil

In Basil's writings there are only two clear references to Acts 17, one in his homily on Psalm 45, the other in his *De Spiritu sancto*. In addition there is a very vague allusion in his rules to Acts 17.30 about the time of repentance and judgement. This is all.

In his homily on Psalm 45 Basil discusses the meaning of *scholazô* "to be at rest, be at ease" in the verse "Be still and know that I am God".[23] First, Basil argues that the sense of *scholazô* is "to be free", meaning to avoid being engaged in affairs foreign to God (*exô theou*). Anyone thus engaged is choked by the pleasures of this world, as the seed is choked by the thorns in the parable in Matthew 13. This brings Basil to reflect on two other Biblical usages of *scholazô*, in Pharaoh's accusations against the Jews of being "lazy, idle" and of using requests to be allowed to worship God as an excuse for not working diligently (Exodus 5.17), and in a somewhat enigmatic saying of Jesus about the risk of being "unoccupied" and thus open to demonic possession (Matthew 12.44, Luke 11.25). From this lexicographical examination Basil draws the conclusion that there is good as well as evil leisure, *scholê*. Good leisure is that which brings the peace necessary for salvation, worthless leisure is the "leisure of the Athenians".[24] The connection between *scholê* and Athens was perhaps irresistible and a good opportunity for Basil to air his usual complaints about Athenian education.

The reference to the Athenians and leisure naturally turns his attention to Acts 17, where the Athenians are noted for their idleness, although Acts uses the non-classical word *eukaireô* instead of *scholazô*. This gives Basil an opportunity to repeat another favourite theme of his, namely the condemnation of vain investigations and new discoveries, *ta kainotera*. He warns his listeners against the evil leisure of the Athenians, who "would spend all their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new", thus quoting Acts 17.21,[25] and then continues to chastise those who imitate this at the present time and misuse their leisure in searching for some new teaching.

[23] Ps. 45.11 (LXX), Basil, *Hom. in Ps. 45*. All translation from the Bible are according to the New Revised Standard Version.

[24] Αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἡ σχολὴ ἀγαθὴ τῷ σχολάζοντι καὶ ὠφέλιμος, ἡσυχίαν ἐμποιοῦσα πρὸς τὴν τῶν σωτηρίων διδαγμάτων ἀνάληψιν· πονηρὰ δὲ σχολὴ ἡ τῶν Ἀθηναίων, ... Basil, *Hom. in Ps. 45* (*PG* 29.429.4-7).

[25] ... πονηρὰ δὲ σχολὴ ἡ τῶν Ἀθηναίων, οἷς *εἰς οὐδὲν ἄλλο εὐκαίρουν ἢ λέγειν τι καὶ ἀκούειν καινότερον*· ἣν καὶ νῦν τινὲς μιμοῦνται, τῇ τοῦ βίου σχολῇ πρὸς τὴν ἀεί τινος καινοτέρου δόγματος εὕρεσιν ἀποχρώμενοι. Basil, *Hom. in Ps. 45* (*PG* 29.429.7-11).

This kind of "leisure", he says, is dear to unclean and wicked spirits, who are said (Matthew 12.44) to return and find the house *scholazonta*, "unoccupied", and are thus able to reenter with seven other spirits.

The other passage where Acts 17 is referred to is found in Basil's treatise on the Holy Spirit. In chapter 17 Basil refutes those who think that the Holy Spirit should not be co-numbered (*sunarithmeisthai*) ***with*** the Father and the Son, but subnumbered (***huparithmeisthai***) ***under*** the Father and the Son.[26] After ridiculing, rather unfairly, the idea that the Spirit is subnumbered as a distinct lower category within the godhead, Basil takes up an argument from his adversaries concerning individual objects of the same category being of higher or lower value. In the midst of his scornful refutation of this argument, he exclaims: "But what will not be said by men who spend their time in 'nothing but telling or hearing something new'? Let these accountants of impiety be classed for the future with Stoics and Epicureans."[27] The reference to the Stoics and Epicureans who listened to Paul and took him to the Areopagus, and the quotation of the passage about "spending their time talking and listening to the latest ideas", are made only in passing, perhaps as a kind of biblical justification for Basil's own criticism of the simple-minded rationality of his opponents. The main connection between Basil's own argument and the texts from Acts is obviously the idea that, like the Athenian philosophers in Acts 17, his opponents are not really serious but spend their time in idle talk. The description of the Athenian philosophers in Acts 17 was somehow in Basil's mind, as he was eager to denigrate theological opponents who resorted to philosophical arguments.

With only these two references to Acts 17 it is easy to conclude that Basil did not see the story of Paul on the Areopagus as a model for a positive encounter between Greek philosophy and religion, and the Christian gospel. There is not a single word about the Athenians worshipping God without knowing him, nor any reference to the quotation from Aratos, "one of their poets" – "in him we live and move and have our being" – a text often cited by early Christian authors. It is not what Paul says or does that Basil has in mind, but the description of the Athenians as people who spend time in futile discussions of new ideas. It is not the text of the New Testament, but rather the widespread image of the Athenians as curious,

[26] Basil, *De Spiritu sancto* 17.42.

[27] Ἀλλὰ τί οὐκ ἂν εἴποιεν οἱ εἰς μηδὲν ἄλλο εὐκαιροῦντες ἢ λέγειν τι καὶ ἀκούειν καινότερον; Ὀνομαζέσθωσαν λοιπὸν μετὰ Στωϊκῶν καὶ Ἐπικουρείων οἱ διαψηφισταὶ τῆς ἀσεβείας.

idle and fond of new deities and cults, that forms the background to Basil's discussion of the story about Paul in Athens.[28]

It is thus of interest to look into what else Basil has to say about Athens, leisure and curiosity. A search in his corpus for Athens and its cognates produces few results. Athens appears no more than ten times in the entire corpus. One instance is in the passage in the homily on Psalm 45, mentioned above; one is a quotation in his rules of 1 Thessalonians 3.1 "we thought it best to stay alone in Athens".[29] All the other references to Athens are in his letters. Since three of them are in letters attributed to Libanius and one in a probably inauthentic letter by Basil to Libanius,[30] we are left with only three explicit references, found in letters 1, 74 and 291. The last is a passing reference to the proverb "to carry owls to Athens",[31] and the one in letter 74 tells us only that Basil thought it as unlikely that an eloquent man would turn up in Caesarea as that someone unqualified would appear in Athens.[32] The only explicit reference to contemporary Athens comes in letter 1, addressed to Eustathius, in which Basil says that "I left Athens when hearing about your philosophy, scorning everything there".[33] Con-

[28] The image of the Athenians presented in Acts is a common topos also in pagan literature. Breitenbach 2003, 216 quotes Chariton 1.11.5f. and Herakleides, Fragment 1.4. References to Athenian curiosity about and hospitality towards foreign deities are listed by Lau 2000, 640, 649. Also Tertullian, in his famous "Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis", links Athens to curiosity: "Nobis curiositate opus non est post Christum Iesum", Tertullian, *De praescriptionibus* 7.

[29] Basil, *Regulae morales* 1.2.

[30] Basil, *Ep.* 353. The authenticity of the correspondence between Libanius and Basil is still debated. See Pouchet 1992: *Basile le Grand et son univers d'amis d'après sa correspondence*, 151-175. Basil's letter praises Athens and its "μοῦσαι καὶ λόγοι".

[31] Basil, *Ep.* 291. The proverb is applied here (in a letter to a bishop) to the enlistment of supposedly well-known, and thus unnecessary, Scriptural support.

[32] Basil, *Ep.* 74. In drastic terms, Basil here describes the decline of Caesarea and the lack of cultural and intellectual life there, and uses Athens as a contrast. The subsequent references to Solon and Athenian defence of freedom, makes it clear that it is classical Athens which he has in mind. I cannot agree with Breitenbach 2003, 229, in seeing an allusion to Acts 17 in this text.

[33] Ἐγὼ κατέλιπον τὰς Ἀθήνας κατὰ φήμην τῆς σῆς φιλοσοφίας ὑπεριδὼν τῶν ἐκεῖ. Basil, *Ep.* 1. I am more hesitant than Philip Rousseau in taking Basil's statement at face value, and in believing that he knew about Eustathius already in Athens. See Rousseau 1994: *Basil of Caesarea*, 40 and 75. The letter was directed to a well-known ascetic bishop by a young admirer, one or two years after his departure from Athens. Basil's own brother, Gregory of Nyssa (*Vita Macrinae* 6.2-12), indicates rather that Basil returned from Athens proud of his learning, and that his "conversion" to Christian asceticism and simplicity came at home and primarily through his sister Macrina.

tempt for Athens and its schools is reflected also in his autobiographical letter 223, where Basil comments on his studies in Athens with the words "wasting my time on the vanity of the wisdom made foolish by God".[34] This negative attitude is, however, in conflict with the fact that Basil was proud of his literary education and maintained that the study of Greek literature was essential in the formation of the Christian youth. But in this ambivalence towards Athens and what it symbolized, there is, strangely, no indication that Basil looked upon his own time in Athens as in any way connected with the story in Acts.[35]

Thus, it is neither in Basil's views on classical Athens, nor in his own experiences, but in his often repeated warnings against curiosity and futile argumentation that we find the real basis for his use of Acts 17. Not only does Basil regard curiosity and new discoveries as very suspect; he regularly accuses all his opponents, in his arguments against them, of being curious and inventors of new ideas, while in his homilies and treatises he repeatedly warns his flock against vain curiosity and empty talk.[36] But this condemnation of talkativeness, which in the references to Acts is linked to Athens and in one of his letters sarcastically to sophists and Attic-speakers in general,[37] is addressed directly to his theological opponents. The passage in Acts is relevant to Basil only as an example of the contrast between vain curiosity and orthodox teaching.

Gregory of Nazianzus

With the exception of four quotations or allusions to Acts 17.28, "in him we live and move and have our being", Gregory of Nazianzus refers directly

[34] Basil, *Ep.* 223. The very rhetorical use of 1 Cor. 1.20 in this strongly apologetic letter, however, makes it difficult to draw any conclusions about Basil more general attitude towards Athens and his years of study.

[35] Basil's ambivalence is described in Rousseau 1994, 40-60. But despite emphasizing the ambiguity, Rousseau ends on a negative note: "So we have to conclude that Basil consistently rejected, probably from the earliest period following his departure from Athens, the claims of the traditional curriculum" (56).

[36] Basil's negative references to curiosity, inventiveness (καινοτομία) and technical language (τεχνολογία) are numerous. See for example: *Hexaemeron* 2.5, 3.8, 6.4, 8.8, 9.4 and *De Spiritu sancto* 4.6, 6.13, 29.73, 74.

[37] Basil, *Ep.* 20.

to the passage in Acts only once, namely in his oration on Athanasius of Alexandria.[38] In order to introduce Athanasius' struggle against Arius, Gregory compares an original, simple and noble discourse on God with contemporary confusion and spiritual blindness. Here he refers to a time "when the present elaborate, far-fetched and technical treatment of theology had not yet entered the divine halls",[39] and then describes how a malignant disease originating in the Sceptic tradition (here identified with Pyrrhon and Sextus) has infected the churches, and "babbling has become regarded as culture".[40] In this connection Gregory introduces the words of Acts 17 on the Athenians, who spend their time on nothing but gossip. Gregory goes on to explain that it was actually Arius who introduced this disease into the churches, and ends with his praise for Athanasius, the first to take up the challenge and fight this evil.[41]

Perhaps significantly, it is not the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers who are blamed, but the Sceptic tradition identified with Pyrrhon and Sextus.[42] Unlike Basil Gregory avoids any specific reference to the "worthless schools" of Athens. By introducing the passage with terms such as ***kateglôttismenos, entechnos,*** as well as ***nosêma*** and ***fluaria,*** Gregory indicates how those who listen to his homily are to understand the "leisure" and "curiosity" of the Athenian philosophers mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.

An implicit reference to Paul and the court of the Areopagus is suggested by Breitenbach for a passage found in Gregory's autobiographical poem *De se ipso et de episcopis* (*Carm.* 2.1.12). Here Gregory asks rhetorically how the apostles could have defended themselves publicly if they had not

[38] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 21.12.1-13.

[39] ἡνίκα τὸ μὲν περιττὸν τοῦτο, καὶ κατεγλωττισμένον τῆς θεολογίας καὶ ἔντεχνον, οὐδὲ πάροδον εἶχεν εἰς τὰς θείας αὐλάς.

[40] ἡ φλυαρία παίδευσις ἔδοξε.

[41] The passage is quoted by Breitenbach 2003, 222f., who concludes that Gregory is indirectly referring to the situation in Constantinople in 379, the date suggested for the oration by Bernardi 1995, 189.

[42] Pyrrhon and Sextus are also mentioned by Gregory in his *Carmina de se ipso et de episcopis (Carm.* 2.1.12.303-308) as examples, albeit here together with Chrysippos, Aristotle and Plato. Other critical judgements on the Athenian schools are found in *Carm.* 2.1.10.198-213 and *Or.* 32.25.1-7.

taken part in education.[43] The passage is part of Gregory's defence of himself, and his education, through a vehement attack on illiterate and rustic bishops. There can be no doubt that Gregory sees himself and his situation in Constantinople in the light of the Acts of the Apostles and Paul's experiences in general, but there is nothing that tells us that Gregory had Acts 17 in mind when he wrote the poem.[44] The reference to the rhetorical abilities and eloquence of the apostles is a refutation of the idea that the simplicity of the apostles, and by implication the gospels, makes education unnecessary, even inappropriate, in a Christian bishop.

If we look for other references to Athens in the writings of Gregory we encounter much more material than was the case with Basil. All in all Gregory refers to Athens thirty-eight times. The majority of these references are to contemporary Athens and his own experiences there. Classical Athens is referred to directly in only one of the orations, in five of his letters and twice in Gregory's poems. In his defence of the right of Christians to a classical education, he ridicules Julian for believing that an inventor of a craft can control who will benefit from it later, and in this connection mentions Athens as the place where agriculture and navigation were invented.[45] In letter 32, Socrates is praised for being unmoved by the death

[43] Πόθεν βασιλεῖς, καὶ πόλεις, καὶ συλλόγους,
Κατηγοροῦντας, εὐθύνοντας ἐν λόγοις,
Πρὸ βημάτων τε, καὶ θεάτροις ἐν μέσοις,
Σοφούς, νομικούς, Ἕλληνας ὠφρυωμένους,
Δημηγοροῦντες, εὐστομοῦντες καίρια,
Ἔπειθον, ἐξήλεγχον ἐν παῤῥησίᾳ,
Εἰ μὴ λόγου μετεῖχον, οὗ σὺ μὴ δίδως. *Carm.* 2.1.12.238-244.

"How could they in courts and theatres, in the midst of sophists, lawyers and haughty Greeks, have, through orations public and speeches fine and timely, persuaded and boldly refuted kings and cities and assemblies, those accusing and in addresses blaming them, if they had not taken part in education?"

[44] I find it hard to agree with Breitenbach 2003, 176-178, and Meier (ed.) 1989: *Gregorius von Nazianz: Über die Bischöfe (Carmen 2.1.12)*, 100, who both think that the words σοφούς and Ἕλληνας ὠφρυωμένους refer to the Athenians in Acts 17.

[45] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 4.108.14-19. The passage is discussed in Breitenbach 2003, 249f. The problematic reference to navigation is discussed in detail in Breitenbach 2000: "Der Schiffbau – Eine Erfindung der Athener", *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft*, N.F. 24, 123-137.

sentence he was given by the Athenians.[46] In letter 90 Gregory evokes the story of the reception of a mission by the Athenians to Sparta as a parable describing his own situation.[47] In letter 114 Gregory defends his reluctance to speak, by quoting an old Athenian fable about swallows and swans, in which the swallows extol their history.[48] In letter 178 he praises the way the young men of Athens were able to choose their occupation.[49] And finally, in letter 189 Gregory recommends a young student to an old friend in Athens, who is asked to imitate Alexander in his quest for a reputation in Athens, "the theatre of his kingdom".[50] In this last instance Gregory hints at his own enthusiasm for the Athenian tradition and his identification with the addressee, a well-known teacher of rhetoric, Eustochios. The first of the two poetic references is an enumeration of classical figures according to their moderation, in which Socrates and Kleanthes are good examples, but where Alkmaion and Plato are presented as negative.[51] Despite being in the first ranks of renowned Athenians, Alkmaion was not only arrogant but also greedy. The second is a passing reference to the struggles between Athens and Thebes and the suicide of Kleombrotos.[52] In all these instances classical Athens is not only described positively, in two of them Gregory also identifies with the Athenians, and in the three others the Athenians are shown to be worthy of emulation.

But the bulk of Gregory's references to Athens draw upon his own experiences in Athens, and most of them are found in his funeral oration

[46] *Ep.* 32.11. The passage is discussed in Breitenbach 2003, 212-215. His conclusion, based on parallels between Gregory's reference to Socrates and New Testament descriptions of Jesus, as well as on the use of other biblical texts in Gregory's letter, is that the mention of the Athenians is influenced by the negative image of the Athenians in Acts 17.

[47] *Ep.* 90.1. Strangely enough no source for Gregory's story has been found. See Breitenbach 2003, 231. Gregory identifies himself with the Athenians, and is most likely referring to how he was received in Cappadocia after his return from Constantinople in 381.

[48] *Ep.* 114. The text is discussed in Breitenbach 2003, 242-244.

[49] *Ep.* 178.1. Here too no source for the alleged custom of the Athenians has been found. See Breitenbach 2003, 232.

[50] *Ep.* 189.1. For this Breitenbach 2003, 189 refers to Plutarch, *Alexander* 60.6, although Plutarch does not speak about Athens as the theatre of Alexander's kingdom, only about his struggling to achieve the praise of the Athenians. The next letter (*Ep.* 190) also mentions Athens, but this time Gregory's own Athens where he befriended the addressee, Eustochios.

[51] *Carm.* 1.2.10.286-308. Gregory refers to Alkmaion also in his oration on Basil (*Or.* 43.3.13-23), where he ridicules classical mythology and the invention of heroic deeds.

[52] *Carm.* 1.2.24.303-324.

on Basil. It is here that, in connection with his praise for Basil, he speaks of "the golden city of learning", of his "love for Athens", of his daily life there, separation and farewell.[53] Also in his autobiographical poem *De vita sua*, the few references to Athens are secondary to his description of his relationship with Basil. Everything Gregory says, from referring to his arrival in Athens and his departure from it, is related to Basil.[54] Later in the poem he deplores the developments in their relationship, and the loss of what had once been achieved in Athens.[55] In his great apology, *De rebus suis*, Gregory succeeds in defending his education in Athens, "the glory of Greece", and at the same time in subjugating his rhetoric to the service of Christ.[56] The Athens of his youth is hailed also in Gregory's long epitaph on Basil.[57] Moreover, three of Gregory's letters to Basil (1, 46 and 58) contain short passages in which he reminds Basil of the time they spent together in Athens and the bond that was created there. In letter 1 he refers to something he had promised Basil in Athens, namely to "philosophize together".[58] In letter 46 he reacts to a an accusation by Basil, reminding him in a highly rhetorical way of Athens and of what it meant to him,[59] and in letter 58 he comments on how people talked about their Athenian friendship.[60]

There are also a few references to Gregory's experiences in Athens that

[53] See *Or.* 43.14-24. The oration and the Athenian friendship between Gregory and Basil has created a literature of its own. See Rousseau 1994, 18-20, and 38-40; Konstan 2000: "How to Praise a Friend", in: Hägg & Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, 160-179; Børtnes 2000: "Eros Transformed", ibid. 180-193; and McGuckin 2001, 54-61, 76-83.

[54] *Carm.* 2.1.11.211-263. The introductory phrase, "Επειτ' Ἀθῆναι καὶ λόγοι. τἀκεῖσε δὲ ἄλλοι λεγόντων, ὡς ..., is interpreted by McGuckin, 2001, 53-63, as referring to an intended silence about Gregory's own experiences, and more specifically his supposed baptism in Athens. At the end of the passage Gregory refers to attempts to retain him and to his staying on fot a short while.

[55] *Carm.* 2.1.11.476-481. The passage is discussed in Breitenbach 2003, 201.

[56] *Carm.* 2.1.1.96-101.

[57] *Epitaph.* 119.35-38. Here Gregory invokes the memory of Athens, of rhetoric and living together, and almost turns Athens into an image of heaven.

[58] συμφιλοσοφήσειν *Ep.* 1.

[59] *Ep.* 46. The letter is discussed in McGuckin 2001, 178f. and in Breitenbach 2003, 183-185.

[60] *Ep.* 58. Here Gregory tells Basil how a philosopher and guest, after having mentioned their friendship, started to slander Basil accusing him of heresy in trinitarian matters. See Breitenbach 2003, 182-183.

are not related to Basil. Gregory reminds Eustochios, a teacher of rhetoric, about their old friendship established in Athens.[61] Athens is mentioned in passing when, in his second oration against Julian, Gregory says that he knew him from Athens.[62] Julian and Athens are also mentioned in passing in Gregory's funerary oration on his brother Caesarius.[63] Finally Gregory speaks about Athens in his epitaph on Prohairesios.[64]

Even if much of what he wrote about Athens forms part of his apology for his own education, with its emphasis on literature and rhetoric, there is no doubt that Gregory genuinely cherished the memory of his experiences there, and continued to uphold the glory of Athens. In his, at times quite powerful, criticism of the Greek philosophical schools and Greek mythology, he avoided any outright rejection of everything Athenian. He blames the young and uneducated, and probably also foreign students, for the *sophistomania* and the disturbances for which Athens was famous.[65] His positive evaluation of Athens and its intellectual life may partly explain why he did not include the story of Paul in Athens in his own writings. His own experiences, as well as his appreciation of the classical Athenian tradition, apparently left little room for the Athens of the Apostle Paul.

Gregory of Nyssa

Paradoxically it is in Gregory of Nyssa who, unlike Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, never went to Athens, that we find a more extensive use of Acts 17. In all he refers to the passage about Paul in Athens at least seventeen times. Moreover, there are no other direct references to Athens in his writings, neither to classical Athens nor to the Athens of his own day. For him the only Athens worth mentioning is the Athens of Paul.

Like Gregory of Nazianzus, though much more frequently, Gregory of Nyssa refers to Acts 17.28: "In him we live and move and have our being".[66] Once, he also makes use of Acts 17.30: "While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to

[61] *Ep.* 190.

[62] *Or.* 5.39.11-16.

[63] *Or.* 7.13.3.

[64] *Epitaph.* 5. Athens is referred to here as the city of Kekrops, which has lost its fame because of the death of Prohairesios.

[65] Σοφιστομανοῦσιν Ἀθήνησι τῶν νέων οἱ πλεῖστοι καὶ ἀφρονέστεροι... *Or.* 43.15.11.

[66] There are eight cases listed in Allenbach (ed.): *Biblia Patristica*, Vol. 5, 334.

repent",[67] and once of Acts 17.31 concerning the day of judgement.[68] But all these quotations are made only in passing, and there is no allusion to the context in Acts. Leaving these aside, we have three interesting instances where debates of Gregory's own day are compared to Acts 17. The first is in his *Contra Eunomium*, the second in his *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione,* and the third a long passage on Acts in his little known and little studied treatise *De deitate Filii et Spiritus sancti.*

In *Contra Eunomium* III.2.163 Gregory refers to Acts 17 as a parallel to the contemporary debates between the Cappadocians and the Eunomians, in a way similar to that which we found in Basil's *De Spiritu sancto.* Eunomius' attack on Basil is seen as a present-day parallel to the Athenians' questioning of Paul as someone "who introduces strange gods".[69] Those who attack Basil are then labelled the "new Stoics and Epicureans" who "spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new".[70] Thus Basil is, like Paul, initially accused by his opponents of introducing something new, a strange God, and then Eunomius, like the Athenians, is accused by Gregory of being interested only in what is new.

In the beginning of *De anima et resurrectione* the grieving Gregory of Nyssa asks Macrina for solid arguments for the resurrection. Instead of answering him, she asks him first to set forth the objections to the resurrection, so that the true argument may serve as a reply.[71] Gregory's first set of arguments are countered in Macrina's first speech, introduced by a reference to Acts 17: "Perhaps it was such arguments as these that the Stoics and Epicureans presented to the Apostle in Athens".[72] There then follows a refutation of Epicurean and Stoic ideas in order to prepare the way for an exposition of the resurrection. This is the only time in the writings of the Cappadocians where we come anywhere near a real attempt to establish a

[67] *Oratio in diem natalem Christi, PG* 46.1132.

[68] *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarem* 203.8.

[69] τοιαύτην ἔσχε καὶ Παῦλος αἰτίαν παρ' Ἀθηναίοις ποτέ, πρὸς αὐτῶν ἐκείνων κατηγορούμενος ὡς ξένα καταγγέλλων δαιμόνια, ὅτε τὴν περὶ τοὺς δαίμονας πλάνην τῶν εἰδωλομανούντων διήλεγχε καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐχειραγώγει, καταγγέλλων ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ τὴν ἀνάστασιν. Gregorius of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* III.2.163.

[70] ταῦτα καὶ νῦν οἱ νέοι Στωϊκοὶ καὶ Ἐπικούρειοι τῷ μιμητῇ τοῦ Παύλου προφέρουσιν, οἱ εἰς οὐδὲν ἕτερον εὐκαιροῦντες, καθὼς περὶ τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἡ ἱστορία φησίν, ἢ εἰς τὸ λέγειν τι καὶ ἀκούειν καινότερον. Ibid.

[71] *De anima et resurrectione* 8.

[72] Τάχα που ταῦτα καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, φησὶ, πρὸς τὸν Ἀπόστολον ἐν Ἀθήναις ποτὲ συστάντες προέφερον Στωϊκοί τε καὶ Ἐπικούρειοι. Gregorius of Nyssa, *De anima et resurrectione* 8.

link with the substance of the story in Acts. The problem to be debated is the resurrection, and the opponents are the Epicureans and Stoics who denied the possibility of a resurrection of the dead. In contrast to Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa not only makes use of the authority of Paul by identifying Macrina's task with his, but also refers to the issue as a serious question and his opponents as people of consequence.

The most extensive treatment of the passage from Acts in Gregory is found, however, in his *De deitate Filii et Spiritus sancti,* an oration held in the presence of the emperor in Constantinople in the spring of 383.[73] After a short introduction Gregory refers back to the banquet of the evening before, and presents his speech as serving up some of the left-overs. As Scripture has it, no one serves new wine in old wineskins, and what Gregory is serving is not new, but old. After another set of metaphors about eating and teaching, referring to the contrast between the abundance of the feast and the hunger of the poor, Gregory inquires rhetorically about the results of last night's "banquet". His reply is a summary of the story in Acts 17 about Paul's visit to Athens and its significance for the present-day debate. Like Acts Gregory begins with Paul's reaction to the idols of the city, adding a reference to the odour of the burnt sacrifices on the altars. Paul's reaction provokes the Stoics and the Epicureans, who take him to the Areopagus. Although it is not explicitly stated, one has the impression that Gregory regards the story in Acts as a model for his own visit to Constantinople and his encounter with Neo-Arian ideas. Gregory continues his speech with another rhetorical question: "Why do I remind you of this reading?", and his reply is: "Since there are, even today, those who like the Athenians spend their time on nothing but telling or hearing about something new".[74] Gregory is, so to speak, recycling the story and its criticism for the day on which he is speaking. He then continues to ridicule those people without education – artisans, servants, run-away slaves – who dare to teach theology and philosophize about things which cannot be perceived. It is here that the famous passage appears where Gregory says that it is impossible to buy things in the market or go to the baths, without

[73] *De deitate Filii et Spiritus sancti, PG* 46.555-576. The only analysis is in Bernardi 1968: *La prédication des pères Cappadociens,* 327-330.

[74] Ὅτι καὶ νῦν εἰσὶ κατ' ἐκείνους τοὺς Ἀθηναίους, εἰς οὐδὲν ἕτερον εὐκαιροῦντες ἢ λέγειν τι καὶ ἀκούειν καινότερον.

becoming entangled in arguments about "begotten" or "unbegotten" or about the relation between the Father and the Son.[75]

Once more, the purpose of invoking Acts 17 is to denounce theological opponents by comparing them and their theological methods with the image of the Athenians in Acts 17.21. The opponents of Gregory are the modern equivalents of the Stoics and Epicureans, their ideas are nothing but idle talk and display a frivolous preference for what is new and startling. What is said in Acts is now manifest to everyone. But contrary to Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa continues with a more positive evaluation of the Athenian opponents of Paul, anyway in comparison with his own opponents. The Athenians had at least realized God's incomprehensibility and made altars to "an unknown God".[76] With all their rational reasoning, flashy new ideas and self-confidence, the modern theologians are thus shown to be worse than any of the old philosophers.[77]

Despite his strongly polemical tone, there is no doubt that Gregory of Nyssa is prepared to both present and discuss opinions of the Greek philosophers to an extent not matched by Basil or Gregory of Nazianzus. This is perhaps most obvious in his *De anima et resurrectione*. His use and interpretation of Acts 17 in *De deitate Filii et Spiritus sancti* should be seen in this light. Having a more distanced view, and perhaps even a certain respect for classical philosophical positions, Gregory of Nyssa was able to appreciate the story in Acts in a way the other two Cappadocians were not. Although we might have thought that their stay in Athens would have made them more open to the meaning of the text of Acts, it is perhaps precisely their own experience of Athens that made them blind to what Luke was trying to say in relating Paul's encounter with classical culture in Athens.

Conclusion

Despite the importance attached to Acts 17 in modern scholarship on the encounter between classical *paideia* and Christianity, and the fact that this is the only biblical passage that is directly related to Athens as well as to the Greek philosophers, the Cappadocians, especially Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea, both of whom had lived in Athens, abstain from

[75] *PG* 46.557.23-28.

[76] *PG* 46.557.46-51.

[77] *PG* 46.557.52-560.1.

using the story about Paul's visit to Athens, and his interrogation by and preaching to the council of the Areopagus. The few references found in their writings all concentrate on the one characteristic of the Athenians as "idle gossipers", whose curiosity is completely meaningless. In all cases the purpose of evoking the story seems to be to criticize contemporary opponents who used a rational approach to theology, that is the Neo-Arians in general and Eunomius in particular. Paul's attempt in the story told by Luke to involve the cult, poetry and questions of the Athenians is of no interest to them.

This said, we can detect certain differences between the three Cappadocians, at least if we look into how their use of Acts 17 relates to other references to Athens in their writings. Basil is obviously the one who is most negative towards Athens and also the one whose reference to the story is most generalized. The story in Acts, as he interprets the text, agrees fully with everything else he has to say in his writings about Athens – namely, a waste of time. Gregory of Nazianzus is much more ambiguous. His references to classical Athens and to his own experience tend to agree and to reveal a positive attitude, and in his reference to Acts he is cautious to single out Pyrrhon and Sextus as the culprits. He did not wish the negative image of Athens as a city of idle talk, into which the words of Acts 17.21 had been read, to be understood as a description of his own Athens. Gregory of Nyssa seems completely uninterested in contemporary Athens, as well as in images of classical Athens. All his references to Athens are related to Acts 17. Although he uses the image of the Athenians as "fond of new teachings" as a parallel with his own opponents, he shows himself to be aware of the point of the story and actually praises both Paul's attempt at accommodation and the Athenian quest for god.

That Gregory of Nyssa was not alone, but rather in line with other Church fathers, is evident if we look into how Acts 17 was interpreted and used by others. Origen twice discusses Acts 17 as an example of the necessity of accommodation, connecting it with what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 9.20-22 about being a Jew to Jews and a Greek to Greeks.[78] He also mentions Paul in Athens in one of the homilies on Leviticus, as an example of how a Christian can preserve his holiness despite the fact that he lives in a completely pagan context.[79] Theodoret of Cyrrhus also writes in connection with Acts 17 about the necessity of accommodation, in a way

[78] Origen, *Comm. in Ioann.* X.7.29 and *Comm. in ep. Cor.* 16.43.

[79] Origen, *Hom. in Lev.* 12.4.

very similar to Origen.[80] But the most interesting passages are found in the works of Athanasius, who not only quotes the line taken from Aratos five times, as well as the dedication of the altar to "an unknown God", but also twice explicitly writes about the necessity of adapting the words of the gospel to the listeners, quoting Paul as the example.[81] This is also the main point made in the first commentary on Acts 17, namely homily 38 in the homilies on Acts by John Chrysostom.[82]

If there is a conclusion to be drawn from the meagre results of an examination of Cappadocian references to Athens, it would be that Gregory of Nazianzus differs from the others as well as from previous tradition in his references to Athens. Basil, in his words on Athens, connects well with Origen and Eusebius, without, however, coming anywhere near their much more profound discussions, and Gregory of Nyssa connects with Athanasius. But where in early Christian literature do we find parallels with the Nazianzen's treatment of Athens? What he has in his mind is somehow neither the real Athens of his own day, nor the biblical Athens. It is rather his own imaginary Athens, or perhaps we might say, his heavenly Athens.

[80] Theodoret, *Interpret. in xiv ep. S. Pauli, PG* 82.300.

[81] Athanasius, *De sententia Dionysii* 7.3.1; *Contra Arianos* IV 35.6.

[82] John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Acta Apostolorum* 38.

7

Playing with expectations: Gregory's funeral orations on his brother, sister and father

Tomas Hägg

Within the short span of six or seven years, Gregory of Nazianzus had to escort three members of his close family to their graves: his younger brother Caesarius in late 368 or early 369, his elder sister Gorgonia in 369 or 370, and his father Gregory who died in the spring of 374 at the age of about ninety-five.[1] The funeral orations that he delivered on these occasions – or, in the case of Gorgonia, perhaps on the first anniversary[2] – have all survived, as Oration 7, 8, and 18, respectively.[3] Whether they were much revised before being distributed in written form, we cannot know, but there is no reason to suspect any large scale augmentation or embellishment.[4] In this respect, Gregory's later memorial speech for his friend Basil – Oration 43, probably delivered on January 1, 382 – is quite another matter.[5]

[1] On the known biographical facts about these persons, see Hauser-Meury 1960: *Prosopographie zu den Schriften Gregors von Nazianz*, 48-50 (Caesarius I), 87 (Gorgonia II) and 88-90 (Gregor der Ältere), and *PLRE* I, 169f. (Caesarius 2), 398 (Gorgonia 2), 403 (Gregorius 2) and 1140 (stemma). On the year of Gorgonia's death, see Van Dam 2003: *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia*, 212 (n. 15) with further refs.

[2] Cf. Calvet-Sebasti 1995: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 6-12*, 54f.

[3] *Or.* 7 and 8 are edited by Calvet-Sebasti 1995; for *Or.* 18, I have used the text in Moreschini 2000: Gregorio di Nazianzo, *Tutte le orazioni*. All three are translated by Leo P. McCauley in McCauley et al. 1953: *Funeral Orations by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Ambrose*; I use his translations with occasional modifications.

[4] Bernardi 1995: *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze: Le Théologien et son temps (330-390)*, 145, however, finds contradictions and "des traces de remaniement" in *Or.* 18 which he believes was originally delivered at an anniversary (perhaps in 375) and revised by Gregory after 381.

[5] Cf. Bernardi 1992: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 42-43*, 27f., and idem 1995, 274; but cf. McLynn 2001: "Gregory Nazianzen's Basil: The Literary Construction of a Christian Friendship", *Studia Patristica* 37, Leuven, 178-193, at 179-183, who argues that the text we possess is only "a slightly reworked version" of the one originally delivered (180).

We have, then, a small corpus of orations by Gregory that all belong to the same rhetorical genre, the *epitaphios logos*,[6] celebrate immediately comparable subjects, and were composed in a certain order within a short period of his writing career. The situation is ideal for a comparative study of his literary technique. Earlier studies have mostly focused on the rhetorical structure of the speeches.[7] This will be my point of departure too; but I shall then go on to discuss other literary aspects: how he chooses to fill and organize the various structural parts, and how he controls and manipulates the conventions – more so, it would seem, the more familiar he becomes with the form. I shall also apply the comparative perspective to his narrative technique in the encomium parts of the speeches, to his spectacular use of at least one dramatic incident in each speech, and to his methods of characterization. After all, Gregory is not only arguably the most accomplished Greek orator after Demosthenes,[8] but a consummate literary artist as well, with a register much broader than the modern label rhetorician would imply.

Gregory's first attempt at a funeral speech, that for his brother, is the

[6] Gregory himself refers to *Or.* 7 and 8 by this term in *Or.* 8.23.13-15, and uses the same term in *Or.* 18.3.6. The more or less strict distinction found in the theoreticians between *epitaphios*, *monôdia* and *paramythêtikos* would not seem to be very helpful for the analysis of Gregory's funeral orations. – For the funeral oration as a rhetorical genre, see Soffel 1974: *Die Regeln Menanders für die Leichenrede in ihrer Tradition dargestellt, herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert*, 6-89; Russell & Wilson 1981: Menander Rhetor, 331f.; Pernot 1993: *La rhétorique de l'éloge dans le monde gréco-romain*, I:19, 78, 288-295 *et passim*; and the works referred to in the following footnote. A brilliant *aperçu* of the pre-Byzantine beginnings of the genre is given in the introduction to Agapitos 2003: "Ancient Models and Novel Mixtures: The Concept of Genre in Byzantine Funerary Literature from Photios to Eustathios of Thessalonike", in: Nagy & Stavrakopoulou (eds.), *Modern Greek Literature: Critical Essays*, 5-23.

[7] See, in particular, Hürth 1906: *De Gregorii Nazianzeni orationibus funebribus*, Guignet 1911: *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze et la rhétorique*, 268-274, 286-303; Mossay 1966: *La mort et l'au-delà dans saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, 24-31; Ruether 1969: *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher*, 112-120; and, for *Or.* 7, Boulenger 1908: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours funèbres en l'honneur de son frère Césaire et de Basile de Césarée*, IX-XXIX. Gregory's rhetorical use of Biblical material (allusion, synkrisis etc.) in the three speeches is analysed by Young 1997: *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 99-111.

[8] Cf. Kennedy 1983: *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, 237, who calls *Or.* 43 "a remarkable speech, probably the greatest piece of Greek rhetoric since the death of Demosthenes", but shows less regard for Gregory's other funeral speeches (237f.).

simplest in structure, the parts of which may be represented by the following diagram:[9]

I. προοίμιον (1)			33
II. ἐγκώμιον	1. γένος (καὶ γένεσις)	πατέρες (2)	13
		πατήρ (3)	14
		μήτηρ (4a)	9
		πατέρες (4b)	20
	2. φύσις, κάλλος (5)		15
	3. ἀνατροφή, παιδεία (6-7)		49
	4. ἐπιτηδεύματα, πράξεις, τὰ τῆς τύχης	Constantinople (8-10)	102
		Julian (11-14)	95
	5. θάνατος, ἐκφορά (15)		38
	6. προσφώνησις (16-17)		43
III. παραμυθία (18-21),			144
συμβουλή (22-23)			53
IV. ἐπίλογος, εὐχή (24)			33
			661

The impression of regularity and predictability given by such a diagram is sometimes deceptive, as is already clear from studying the number of printed lines devoted to each structural part (see righthand column). But, on the whole, the handbook structure is recognizable and the parts follow in the prescribed order.

After the *prooimion* (I), there is the encomium part (II) which occupies more than half the speech (398 out of 661 lines).[10] Under the heading *genos*, "family" (II.1), Gregory speaks of their shared parents, to whom Caesarius owed his virtue. Inherited virtue is the main point in the next passage as well, labelled "nature and beauty" in the diagram (II.2). In these 15 lines, there is in fact only a very brief clause about his physical beauty and charm, with the proviso that such characteristics may be important to others, but not to this (Christian) speaker. Their common up-bringing and different choices of professions and universities follow (II.3), with an expected emphasis on Caesarius' extraordinary intellectual gifts. The hyperbolic language Gregory uses here is part of the standard idiom of a eulogy, yet it is

[9] My diagram is based on that of Boulenger 1908, XXVII, with minor modifications. Chapter numbers appear in parenthesis, the number of printed lines (in Calvet-Sebasti 1995) is added in the righthand column.

[10] For its various components, cf. Menander Rhetor 419.11-422.4.

carefully handled so that Caesarius is never seen to be eclipsing his brother the speaker.[11] Under the headings *epitêdeumata*, "accomplishments", *praxeis*, "actions", and "fortune" (II.4), we find descriptions of his professional career at Constantinople and of his quarrel with Emperor Julian – magnified into a theatrical contest of heroic dimensions – before we arrive at the account of the earthquake that he miraculously survived at Nicaea.[12] His untimely death shortly afterwards and his funeral are briefly recounted (II.5), and the encomium part finishes with a typical direct address (*prosphônêsis*) to the deceased (7.16.1): "This, Caesarius, is my funeral offering (*entaphion*) to you..." (II.6).

"What yet remains?" (7.18.1) Consolation and advice! This substantial section (III) occupies almost a third of the speech (197 out of 661 lines), blending the topical with the personal. Quotations from the Old Testament, especially the Psalms and Ecclesiastes, stress the negative aspects of "the game (*paignion*) we play on earth" (7.19.2) – death has in fact released Caesarius from innumerable evils.[13] The consolation culminates in Gregory's moving vision of his reunion with his beloved brother at the end of time (7.21.33-39):[14]

> Then shall I see Caesarius himself, no longer in exile, no longer being buried, no longer mourned, no longer pitied, but splendid, glorious, sublime, such as you were often seen in a dream, dearest and most loving of brothers, whether my desire or truth itself represented you.

The "advice" brings further, more general considerations about the vanity

[11] While in chs. 6-7 on education the speaker elaborates eloquently and in great detail on the convention represented by Menander Rhetor's "he was ahead of his contemporaries" (420.21), there is never any counterpart to Menander's family topos "he was, as it were, a shining torch lit in that family" (419.19-20).

[12] On Caesarius' career, see also (in addition to the works referred to in n. 1) Van Dam 1995: "Self-Representation in the Will of Gregory of Nazianzus", *Journal of Theological Studies* 46, 118-148, at 120-122, and idem 2003, 60-65.

[13] The use of this consolation topos is placed in context by Harl 1984: "Les modèles d'un temps idéal dans quelques récits de vie des Pères Cappadociens", in: Leroux (ed.), *Le temps chrétien de la fin de l'Antiquité au Moyen Âge IIIe-XIIIe siècles*, 220-241, at 226-228 ("L'angoisse devant le temps de la vie"). The pagan version of the topos, to be used precisely for those who die young ("whom the gods love"), is exemplified in Pseudo-Dionysius, "On Epideictic Speeches", p. 282 Radermacher: "they escaped the pains of life and the sorrows that befall men, countless and infinite," etc.; trans. Russell & Wilson 1981, 376).

[14] Cf. Jostein Børtnes' chapter (3) in the present volume, and Mossay 1966, 194-201.

of life, about death and resurrection, and deification. The epilogue (IV) contains a direct address to the weeping parents who now accompany their youngest son to the tomb they had prepared for themselves, and ends in a prayer.

In a funeral oration delivered immediately after the death had occurred, one would have expected a *thrênos*, a lamentation, typically following the description of death and burial and itself leading up to the consolation.[15] The absence of a *thrênos* in our speech is only apparent, however. Even though there is no separate such section before the consolation, the lamentation topos is in fact referred to at various points in the speech, taking the rhetorical forms of *praeteritio* (*paraleipsis*) and paradox. Already at the very beginning, Gregory explicitly states that those who expect him to indulge in mourning and lamentation for the deceased, will be disappointed. Others do so, *he* will not, at least not "more than is proper" (7.1.17). The description he devotes at this prominent point to what would be expected in a speech like this, is of course in itself a concession to the form, and a kind of fulfilment of the audience's expectations. In terms of rhetorical theory, Gregory knows that a *monôdia* is expected, but finds an *epitaphios* more appropriate at a Christian funeral. Or, more to the point, he creates a new form of funeral oration that amalgamates the old pagan forms and introduces into them more specifically Christian topoi.[16]

Immediately afterwards, still in the *prooimion*, he returns to the topic of lamentation in more positive terms, stating that tears and admiration must have their place according to "the rules of the genre" (7.1.23). Similar references to the "rule(s)" (*nomos*) are a regular feature in the other two orations as well, mostly where the rules are broken. In defence of adhering for once to the rhetorical rules of the Hellenes, he now (7.1.25-27) cites the Old Testament, a passage from Proverbs (10.7): "The memory of the just is with praises (*enkômia*)", and then one from Sirach (38.16): "Let your tears fall for the dead, and as one who is suffering grievously begin your lamentation

[15] Cf. Menander Rhetor 421.10-14.

[16] On Gregory's Christianization of pagan funeral rhetoric, see Guignet 1911, 286-303. Soffel 1974, 80, finds that the Christian view of death cannot alone explain Gregory's rejection of the lamentation topos, since Gregory of Nyssa uses it freely. Furthermore, he sensibly argues (1974, 1, 50, 71-78, 80) that our approach to ancient funeral oratory is unduly coloured by Menander Rhetor and other theoreticians, who try to define categories and formulate rules on the basis of a manifold practice; in fact, the breaking of these "rules" is the rule throughout the tradition, not something that starts with the Christian orators.

(*thrênos*)." But the announcement and justification are not followed by any actual lament. Towards the end of the speech, the topic is resumed, and again negated (7.20.1): "Let us *not*, then, bewail Caesarius..." – *he* is released from the evils, it is *we*, who are left in this life, that are the proper subjects of lamentation. This paradox is followed by an enumeration of all that Caesarius had left undone in life, each item coupled with some evil he escaped by dying. Lamentation is thus topicalized many times over, but never indulged in: "*putting aside* (*apheis*) lamentation", as Gregory says when passing from consolation to advice (7.22.1).

Such sophisticated play with the form is still more evident in Gregory's other two funeral orations. Let us first look at the standard opening of the encomium part of a funeral speech, praise of the *genos* of the deceased. In his speech on Caesarius, Gregory diligently adheres to the rules, praising in rather general terms first the two parents together, then the father, then the mother, and finally the parents again, a symmetrical construction which includes several conventional topoi: everybody knows the parents' virtue, but no single speaker can do justice to all aspects of it; if neither of them can gain the first prize on earth, it is only because the other is just as perfect; and so on (7.2-4).

One or two years later, we would expect the same parents to be praised again in Gregory's speech on Gorgonia. After a *prooimion* in which he defends his right to praise his own sister, Gregorys says (8.3.3): "Let me now proceed to the eulogy proper". Everybody knows what will follow, all eyes are turned towards the elderly parents among the mourners. But Gregory cannot resist the temptation to play again with his listeners' expectations. "Let another," he says (8.3.11-13), "with more regard for the rules of panegyric, praise the country (*patris*) and the family (*genos*) of the deceased. And he will not lack many excellent topics..." The audience relaxes, this is the standard beginning of a *praeteritio*, they will still be sufficiently edified about the excellence of Gregory and Nonna. But the preteritional enumeration has barely begun, when Gregory seems to be cheating them again (8.3.17-21): "Having observed the rules in these matters to the extent of *mentioning* our common parents, ... I will turn my attention as quickly as possible to Gorgonia herself...". Which does not prevent him from taking another unexpected turn and devoting the next few minutes – or 36 printed lines – to praising in some detail the "Abraham and Sarah of our time" (8.4.1-2).

Yet the two celebrations of the same parents – both delivered in their presence, in successive years – are quite different. The insistence on shared

virtue and general excellence in the oration on Caesarius is developed here into a more specific or individualized *laudatio*. On the first occasion, Gregory the Elder's descent from a Hypsistarian family was merely alluded to in metaphorical language: "Our father was well engrafted from the wild olive into the cultivated olive..." (7.3.1-2).[17] It was also suggested that Gregory's perfection was his wife's work, but without any specific details (7.4.6-7). In the speech on Gorgonia, we receive more concrete information. The parents are named, they are Gregory and Nonna, "for it is not right to omit the mention of names that are an exhortation to virtue" (8.4.1-4). Whatever one makes of such a justification, the individualization has started. "He fled the bondage of his father's gods", we are told (8.4.6-7). "He went forth from his kindred and his father's house for the sake of the land of promise, and *she* was the occasion of his departure (*ekdêmia*)" (8.4.8-10). The description continues in the same manner, contrasting the different roles of each of them. The crucial part that Nonna played in Gregory's conversion is stressed once more in different words, and her refusal to admit members of Gregory's family into their house is alluded to, before the speaker again unites the two in inseparable virtue and piety, as he had done in his earlier oration.

Why this difference in outspokenness between the two orations, this shift from the general and allusive to the specific? Perhaps it is simply a function of the composition of the audience on the two separate occasions. It has been suggested that occasionally in the oration on Caesarius, for instance when Gregory refers to Providence (*oikonomia*, 7.4.24-26), the wording indicates that there were both Christians and non-Christians present at the funeral.[18] No doubt, these non-Christians were members of Gregory the Elder's family, that is, Hypsistarians, who could not readily be barred from the funeral in the manner they obviously were from Gregory's

[17] The metaphor, which Gregory repeats in 18.11.15, is taken from Romans 11.17-24. The grafting of shoots from a wild olive onto a cultivated one, which seems paradoxical from a modern point of view, is in fact in accordance with ancient horticultural practice, the object being to rejuvenate the tree. See Columella, *De re rustica* 5.9.16-17; 5.11.1-15; and Baxter & Ziesler 1985: "Paul and Arboriculture: Romans 11.17-24", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 24, 25-32. If Gregory knew this practice and its object as well as Paul obviously did, the implication would be that the engraftment of the Hypsistarian Gregory senior has benefited Nonna's Christian family in the same way as the inclusion of the Gentiles led to the rejuvenation of Israel.

[18] See Calvet-Sebasti 1995, 189 n. 7.

and Nonna's home.[19] The new openness in the oration on Gorgonia would imply that Gregory's family did not take part in that funeral or anniversary, probably held at Iconium where Gorgonia had lived as a married woman. Certainly, Gorgonia herself had been as anti-Hypsistarian as her mother and effectively cut herself off from that part of the *genos*. Caesarius would have been less of a fanatic.

In Gregory's oration on his father, the play with the conventions takes another drastic turn. It starts with a direct address, not to the deceased but to Gregory's old friend Basil who was present in person.[20] When the loss of Gregory the Elder is first mentioned, it is formally subordinated to the appearance of Basil: why has he come, is it to watch over the flock that has lost its pastor? (18.2.3-4) The fact that Basil attended the funeral probably inspired Gregory to manipulate this oration in a more sophisticated way than the preceding two. The introductory part would no doubt have earned applause in the Athenian classrooms which the two of them had left some 15 years earlier. Basil is expected, so Gregory pretends, to be the one who delivers the real oration, a "pure" (*katharos*) funeral speech in which he will praise the departed's life, philosophize over death and life, and console the abandoned flock. But while inviting Basil to deliver such a speech, Gregory in fact formulates himself a detailed abstract of the exemplary *epitaphios logos* that he alleges only Basil could perform (18.3-4). He then states that though Basil is the better orator, he himself knew the deceased better. He will thus still present the outline of an encomium,[21] deliver the raw material as it were, before Basil takes over the real funeral speech. Pretence or not – Basil may well have delivered an oration after Gregory, though no such work has survived or is alluded to elsewhere[22] – Gregory's so-called outline grows into the substantial speech that follows these playful preliminaries.

Gregory's "outline" opens with an announcement similar to one that occurs in the same place, at the beginning of the encomium part, in the speech on Gorgonia (18.5.1-4): "The treatment of his country, family,

[19] *Or.* 8.5.4 and *Or.* 18.10.8 on Nonna's refusal to "share salt with the worshippers of idols"; cf. Dölger 1936: "Nonna. Ein Kapitel über christliche Volksfrömmigkeit des vierten Jahrhunderts", *Antike und Christentum* 5, 44-75, at 56-59.

[20] The appropriateness of Gregory's deflection of attention from the deceased father to the present friend is questioned by Hürth 1906, 53f. and Guignet 1911, 299.

[21] 18.4.20 σκιαγραφήσω καὶ προχαράξω.

[22] See Gallay 1943: *La vie de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, 125 n. 4.

bodily qualities, external splendour, and other things on which men pride themselves I shall leave to the rules of panegyric."[23] There then follows the most detailed and critical description we have in Gregory's writings of his father's Hypsistarian background (18.5).[24] A novel feature, proper to an encomium, is his attempt to characterize Gregory the Elder as already a Christian in heart and ethos before he met Nonna, married her, and was converted (18.6). But Gregory the Elder's father and mother are never described, they never emerge as individuals. Instead, when the narrative arrives at the conversion, it is Nonna who enters the oration and remains the main subject of praise for several chapters (18.7-11). It has been considered strange that a funeral speech on Gregory the Elder initially devotes so much attention to his wife. Perhaps Gregory knew, it has been suggested, that he would never be able to deliver a funeral speech on his mother and thus compensated for this in advance. Or he later expanded the oration in order to make it his panegyric on his mother as well.[25] Or he was carried away spontaneously by the fact that his mother meant so much more to him than his father[26] – in which case, it was a rather tactless slip, one might think, at his father's funeral. But if one considers at what point in the speech this description occurs, another explanation presents itself. We find the praise of Nonna at the same point where the detailed descriptions of the *parents* are situated in the speeches on Caesarius and Gorgonia. Nonna fills the lacuna left by Gregory's need *not* to dwell on his father's humble and non-Christian parents. Gregory's conversion is his spiritual birth,[27] and Nonna is, in a way, Gregory's spiritual mother. It is in this capacity, not in that of his wife, that she assumes such a prominent position in the oration.

Next in an encomium, following the *genos*, we would expect a description of "nature and beauty". In his speech on Caesarius, Gregory seamlessly passes from parents to son by stressing the virtue of the deceased as being

[23] πατρίδα καὶ γένος καὶ σώματος εὐφυΐαν καὶ τὴν ἔξωθεν περιφάνειαν καὶ τἄλλα οἷς μέγα φρονοῦσιν ἄνθρωποι τοῖς τῶν ἐγκωμίων νόμοις παρείς …

[24] Cf. Mitchell 1999: "The Cult of Theos Hypsistos between Pagans, Jews, and Christians", in: Athanassiadi & Frede (eds.), *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, 81-148, at 94f.

[25] Thus McGuckin 2001: *St Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, 225.

[26] Cf. Gallay 1943, 125: "… Grégoire était trop sincère, trop spontané pour s'empêcher de dire publiquement tout le bien qu'il pensait d'elle."

[27] Thus Ruether 1969, 113.

immediately inherited from them (7.5.4-5). Tribute is paid to his beauty, grace and harmonious voice (7.5.11-12). No other details about his character or appearance are given, before the speaker turns to his upbringing, education and career, all narrated in a chronological order and occupying about two fifths of the oration (about 250 lines). In the speech on Gorgonia, the proportions are totally different. We find nothing about her upbringing or education, where we would have expected it, and no chronological account of the main part of her life. Instead, the two fifths of this oration that follow the *genos* part (about 200 lines) are taken up with what may be said to fall formally under the heading "nature and beauty"; in reality, however, it is a substitute for "accomplishments and actions", only differently structured.[28] The dominating theme is Gorgonia's extreme piety and her perfect modesty in lifestyle and appearance. Her "beauty" is, paradoxically, her total rejection of any cosmetics or adornment, emphasized by a detailed description of everything that she *refrained* from (8.10)[29] – an ekphrasis in preteritional terms. While a programmatic Christian disinterest in bodily beauty prevented Gregory from describing his brother's physical appearance in any detail, as would have been expected in a pagan epitaphios of someone who had died in his best years, he now lets his ekphrastic talents blossom in this privative depiction of his sister's charms.[30]

The sparse information we receive about the outer facts of Gorgonia's life is scattered throughout the whole section. We are informed that she was married, though not when or to whom (8.20.8-10), while the couple's place of residence – presumably Iconium[31] – is never mentioned. That she had children and children's children – her *euteknia*, "happiness of children" – is noted as if by chance, because she dedicated them to God (8.8.26-27). We learn that she and her husband practiced sexual abstinence after the children were born (8.8.19-22), that they were both baptized (8.14.17; 20.1-8), and that she never became a widow (8.12.10-12). She was active in church life, revered the local priest (8.11.23-26), made donations and provided for the poor, but was seen as little as possible outside her home. That is about all.

[28] There is a diagram of the structure of the encomium part in Mossay 1972: "Notes sur l'herméneutique des sources littéraires de l'histoire byzantine", *Recherches de philologie et de linguistique*, III sér., *Section de philologie classique* III, 39-51, at 41.

[29] See Virginia Burrus' chapter (8) in the present volume, p. 160.

[30] Pointed out by Guignet 1911, 200f.

[31] Cf. Hauser-Meury 1960, 28 s.v. "Alypius V", and Van Dam 2003, 94.

This whole section is thus structured according to Gorgonia's various virtues, with her few *praxeis* subordinate to them. Conversely, in the speech on Caesarius, the *praxeis* provide the general structure and his manly virtues emerge through them. Yet, the very same rhetorical figures are used to magnify her female virtues as his intelligence and courage (cf., e.g., 8.13.25-29 with 7.7.1-10), and the climax that each description eventually leads up to is strikingly similar in structure, if not in elaboration. The earthquake at Nicaea in 368 from which Caesarius was miraculously saved is the dramatic high point in that speech, immediately followed by his conversion to a spiritual life, and his illness and death (7.15). The corresponding drama in Gorgonia's life – typically private in contrast to the famous event that struck her brother – is a street accident with mules and a carriage from which she was saved only by a miracle (8.15). While the former incident is merely referred to in outline, the latter is told in vivid detail, with the focus on Gorgonia's wonderful healing. An intense scenic description is then devoted to a "strange and unusual" disease that befell Gorgonia, but from which she again recovered through her extreme piety and by divine intervention (8.16-18).[32]

"Such were the circumstances of her life",[33] Gregory concludes (19.1) before he turns to "her holy and celebrated death". Here, at last, a chronologically structured narrative takes over: how she longed for death as a blessing, how she was told in a vision on what day she would depart and made the proper preparations, then on the appointed day how she collected family and friends around her, including her old mother and her friend the bishop, talked to them and finally passed peacefully away, faintly murmuring a psalm that only the bishop was able to hear.[34] This rather unexpected intimacy and even warmth in the description contrasts with the detached idealization that dominates the earlier parts of the speech. It is prefigured, however, by the increasingly personal tone in the depiction of the cures, first from wounds, then from illness, and is followed up in the *prosphônêsis* to Gorgonia into which the death scene smoothly passes

[32] The scene in the church (8.18) is analysed in Thurston 1910: "The Early Cultus of the Reserved Eucharist", *Journal of Theological Studies* 11, 275-279.

[33] τὰ μὲν δὴ τοῦ βίου τοιαῦτα.

[34] There is a fine analysis of the death scene as ekphrasis in Mossay 1966, 27-31 (*inter alia*, it is in accordance with the rules of ekphrasis that Gregory chooses a chronological structure); see further Mossay 1972, and (adding further parallels) idem 1975: "Note sur Grégoire de Nazianze, Oratio VIII, 21-22", *Studia Patristica* 12:1, 113-118.

(8.22.30-31): "These were the words of your psalm, fairest of women ...".[35] Exactly as in the final vision of Caesarius (7.21.33-39, quoted p. 136), the emotion breaks through in the sudden passage from third-person narrative to apostrophe of the deceased. Gregory himself explicitly (8.23.13-15) marks the connection with his earlier epitaphios: he has had to give funeral speeches over both brother and sister, he complains – but who will be left to speak in *his* memory when that time comes?

Those who insist that Gregory hardly knew his sister,[36] or even disliked her, can hardly have read the speech to the end, or lack the instruments to translate his rhetorical pathos into terms more congenial to us. It is true that the rather impersonal section about Gorgonia's virtues replaces more concrete details about her education and career, which give more substance and individuality to the oration on Caesarius. But it is a married woman whose life Gregory is now expected to praise. He would hardly have had free access to her house (or have been expected to have been so intimate with his married sister), whether she actually lived at Iconium or closer to Gregory himself. He met the challenge – to praise a woman[37] – by painting an ideal picture, in the hyperbolic language that the panegyric genre demanded. The exaggeration is no greater in kind than at certain points in his speech on Caesarius, except that the instances are multiplied and uninterrupted by the occasional mild criticism he bestows on his brother's ambitions for a public career. The notion that Gregory is in fact praising his mother while speaking about Gorgonia, is mistaken.[38] It is an ideal portrait which would naturally include virtues that he had observed and admired in his mother, but the function is to praise precisely Gorgonia, not Nonna, and at the same time, as he himself stresses (e.g., 8.3.7-8), to formulate an example for others to imitate.[39]

A man's life, then, is built up as a linear succession of deeds and events, each apt to reveal his innate virtues; a woman's life, Gregory seems to imply, is a timeless continuum in which her various virtues manifest themselves concurrently. In his third attempt at a funeral oration, that for his father, Gregory again manipulates the encomium to achieve his purposes. This speech no doubt represented his greatest challenge so far. His father had a long and active life behind him, the first fifty years as a local official and Hypsistarian, the remaining forty-five, which coincided with Gregory's own lifetime, as a Christian and a bishop. We have already seen how hastily he disposed of the first half, offering almost no details about outer events, but concentrating on the Hypsistarian sect and suggesting that his father had always been a Christian at heart. Nevertheless, the narrative part that we shall now consider had to cover a much larger time span than in the cases of Caesarius and Gorgonia, who had both died comparatively young, and many more incidents, in which the Younger Gregory had been personally involved and emotionally engaged, to select from. Furthermore, his relationship with his father was complicated, as letters, orations and poems attest, swinging from love and respect to resentment and acute rejection.[40] The resulting oration is almost as long as those on Caesarius and Gorgonia put together, and the narrative part occupies most of the space.

The extensive praise of Nonna placed at the beginning of the encomium, where we would have expected Gregory's *genos* to be celebrated, leads into the first events in his life that are represented scenically: his conversion through Nonna at the age of about fifty (12), his accidental – and wonderful (12.21 *thauma*) – ordination as a priest instead of a catechumen, and his baptism (13). After a synkrisis of his father with a succession of great Biblical figures, from Moses to Paul (14),[41] Gregory turns to

[35] Dying with a prayer or Biblical quotation on one's lips belongs to the topoi of Christian death scenes (cf. Mossay 1966, 31f.), recurring also in Gregory's orations on his father (18.38.13) and on Basil (43.79.10) – the ekphrastic representation of a death in Christ.

[36] E.g., Van Dam 2003, 85 ("almost completely ignorant"), 93-96. Van Dam also asserts that Gregory had had little emotional attachment to his sister even when they were children (94), which we cannot possibly know, and that he tells the stories of her accident, illness and death "as an outsider", including "little of his own emotional reaction" (95).

[37] Cf. Calvet-Sebasti 1995, 61-82 ("L'éloge d'une femme"), and Vatsend 2000, 45-48 (encomia on empresses).

[38] Van Dam 2003, 85, 97f. Equally unfounded is Van Dam's assertion (2003, 88, 200 n. 4, 211 n. 2) that Nonna was in fact a whole generation younger than her husband. It is based on statistical probability only (that women married young) and bluntly contradicts what her son repeatedly states (or implies) publicly (in particular, 8.5.7 ἴσον ... μήκει βίου καὶ πολιαῖς, 18.41.10 Σάρρᾳ ... καὶ ὁμοζύγῳ καὶ ἰσοχρόνῳ). The repeated comparisons of the old parents Gregory and Nonna with Abraham and Sarah (e.g., 8.4-5) would be meaningless if Van Dam were right.

[39] The model aspect is stressed in the running analysis of the speech presented by Guerri 1994: "El elogio fúnebre de Gorgonia, modelo de filosofía cristiana", *Helmantica* 45, 381-392.

[40] Cf. the empathetic discussion in McGuckin 2001, 8-18 *et passim*. Cf. also the pertinent remarks of McLynn 1998a: "The Other Olympias: Gregory Nazianzen and the Family of Vitalianus", *Zeitschrift für Antike und Christentum* 2, 227-246, at 234f.

[41] For Gregory's intricate use of Biblical prefiguration in this speech, see McGuckin 2001, 16-22.

describing the Elder Gregory's life after becoming a priest, while stressing the consistency between this and his previous life (15ff.). His self-education by reading Scripture is praised (16) – this replaces any description of his earlier secular *paideia*. The narrative is chronologically structured, but only in a rudimentary way through temporal adverbs and the like; there is no specification of points in time or number of years passing. A whole chapter (19) is devoted to expressing the great effort it costs the panegyrist to select his narrative material from such a rich and eventful life. What figures in other orations as just a conventional topos (*aporêsis*) – in order to extol the object as well as exonerate the speaker from being accused of any important omissions – is worked out here in a more concrete and personal manner. Forty-five years of close relationship must have made him feel the task to be almost impossible.

Then, as if in response to this sense of inadequacy, Gregory switches from the chronological narrative to an illustrated catalogue of his father's virtues, similar to the more extensive one in his oration on Gorgonia. The Elder Gregory's zeal, generosity, and excellence in all virtues are praised in superlative terms, with Nonna again entering the scene as his equal (20-21). The extensive characterization of Gregory alone that then follows (22-27) is remarkable for its sharpness of observation and virtuosity in expressing criticism without breaking the rules of the encomium. His father's most conspicuous character traits, his simplicity (ἁπλότης) and his asperity (τραχύτης), are – on the surface – praised as virtues, while at the same time his rather unsympathetic, even brutal, persona emerges clearly in the graphic descriptions of his behaviour as landowner, pater familias and bishop rolled into one. A typical passage reads as follows (25.14-21):[42]

> His benevolence was superhuman. The wheel and the lash were often threatened, and men were at hand to apply them, but the danger ended in the pinching of the ear or the slapping of the cheek or the cuffing of the temple. In this fashion was the threat carried out. When clothing and shoes were pulled off and the culprit stretched upon the ground, his anger was directed, not against the evil-doer, but against his eager assistant, as a minister of evils. How could anyone have appeared kindlier and worthier to offer gifts to God?

And another (26.12-22):[43]

[42] Trans. McCauley 1953, 138.

[43] Trans. McCauley 1953, 139.

> Although he was so simple and godlike of soul and character, he was yet an object of fear to the insolent because of his piety, or, rather, nothing made such an impression on them as the simplicity they despised. It was impossible for him to utter a prayer or an imprecation without the immediate bestowal of some lasting benefit or temporary pain. For the prayer proceeded from his inmost heart, while the imprecation was only on his lips, as a fatherly rebuke. Indeed, to many of those who offended him requital was not slow in coming ... But they were struck down at the very moment of passion, were brought to their senses, turned to him, fell on their knees before him, obtained pardon, and withdrew, gloriously vanquished, and became better men, both for the chastisement and the pardon.

There is a masterly balance between panegyric idealization and lifelike character description. Those present would have recognized the deceased master in all his uncouth self-righteousness, while still feeling that they were taking part in the expected glorification.

After this *tour de force* in character description, Gregory resumes the chronological thread and presents a succession of dramatic scenes, beginning with his father's almost fatal illness and miraculous recovery on Easter night (18.28.6-29.25):[44]

> [28] ... He was sick, then, and the time of his sickness was the holy and glorious Easter, the queen of days, that splendid night that dissipates the darkness of sin, in which we celebrate with abundant light the feast of our salvation, and in which, dying with the Light who died on our behalf, we rise again with Him who rose. This was the time of his affliction. Its nature, to describe it briefly, was as follows. A violent, burning fever consumed all his vitals, his strength had failed, he was unable to take food, his sleep had departed, he was in great distress, suffering from palpitation of the heart. The whole interior of his mouth, including the palate and the whole upper surface, had broken out into so many and such virulent and incessant ulcers that the swallowing even of water was not easy or without danger. Neither the skill of doctors, nor the prayers of his friends, however assiduous, nor any healing application was of avail. He was, then, in this condition, breathing slowly and with difficulty, not even perceiving those present, but wholly intent upon his departure and the things he had long desired and had now been made ready for him.
>
> We were in God's temple, and occupied both with the sacred rites and with our supplications,[45] for we had despaired of all else and betaken our-

[44] Trans. McCauley 1953, 141-143 (adapted), text Moreschini 2000.

[45] μύστας ὁμοῦ καὶ ἱκέτας.

selves to the great physician and the power of that night as the last source of succour. With what intention, shall I say? To celebrate the feast or to mourn? To keep the festival or honour with funeral service one no longer here? Oh, those tears then shed by the whole people! Oh, the voices, and cries, and hymns mingled with the singing of psalms! They sought the priest from the temple, the minister from the sacred rites, their worthy protector from God. My Miriam [Nonna] led them and struck the timbrel,[46] not of triumph but of supplication, learning then for the first time to put aside shame in the face of sorrow, and calling both upon the people and upon God: upon the people, to sympathize with her in her distress and to vie in pouring out their tears; upon God, that he might hear her petitions, reminding Him, with the inventive power of grief, of all His miracles in former times.

[29] What, then, was the response of the God of that night and of the sick man? Trembling comes upon me as I continue the story. And you, too, may tremble as you listen to me, but do not disbelieve – for that would be impious, since I myself am the relater and it concerns him. The time of the mystery was at hand. All were reverently in their places, in order and in silence for the sacred rites. But he [Gregory] is then revived by Him who raises the dead to life, and by the holy night. At first he moves a little, then with more vigour. Then he called by name, very weakly and in an indistinct voice, one of the servants who were attending him, and bade him come forward and bring his clothes and lend his hand to support him. He came in consternation, and eagerly ministered to him. And he, making use of the guiding hand as a staff, imitated Moses on the mount, and forming his enfeebled hands in an attitude of prayer, and in union with or on behalf of the people, eagerly celebrated the Mysteries. He employed few words, such as his weakened condition allowed, but his mind, as it seems to me, was in perfect condition (oh, wonder!), in the sanctuary without a sanctuary, a sacrificer without an altar, a priest far from the sacred rites – yet all these things were at hand for him by the power of the Holy Spirit, and recognized by him, but completely invisible to those present. Then, after the customary words of thanksgiving and the blessing of the people, he reclined again in his bed. After he had taken a little food and enjoyed some sleep, his spirit was revived and his health was gradually restored. When the new day of the feast came, for that is what we call the first Sunday after the Resurrection, he repaired to the temple of God, and with the whole congregation of his church present, he celebrated the renewal of his health and offered the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

[46] Exodus 15.20f.: "Then Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dancing. And Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously …'".

In this moving account, we find the typical features of Gregory's narrative style in the encomium parts of these orations (though less elaborated in *Or.* 7 than in the others). There is the description of the illness, with its various symptoms set out in graphic detail, and then the gradual physical recovery. The description carries the stylistic mark of the ekphrasis, with short cola, even series of isocola, with parallelism and assonance.[47] Furthermore, there are the questions and exclamations, the biblical *sunkriseis* and identifications (Nonna *is* Miriam), the paradoxes and contrasts (festival/funeral etc.), the emotional inclusion of the speaker himself as speaker. What happens in the church and in the sick-room simultaneously, during the Easter vigil, is described in a kind of double exposure, with a dramatic timing of the miracle, the salvation, during the very celebration of the Eucharist.[48] The servant is introduced as the perplexed mediator of the events, an implied witness to the miracle. All these elements contribute to the dramatic tension and emotional impact of the scene.

The corresponding description of his mother's illness, cured by the Younger Gregory appearing to her in a dream (30), leads into the role that his parents – in reality, his mother – played in his own salvation from the terrible storm that had struck his ship when he travelled from Alexandria to Athens (31).[49] One may well feel that the speaker now strays from the point, making the association between his father's illness and mother's illness, between his mother's salvation and his own salvation, thus drifting from the life of the deceased to his own life. In fact, Gregory himself admits as much (32.1-3) and promises to proceed from these private matters to his father's courageous involvement in the "difficulties of the time" (32.3-4). There then follow extensive accounts (the term used is *diêgêma*) of the Elder Gregory's firm opposition to Emperor Julian on several occasions and his decisive influence on church politics at Caesarea, in particular in having Basil elected bishop. Gregory's talent for dramatic description is

[47] E.g., 18.28.12-14: ἡ δὲ δύναμις ἐπελελοίπει, τῶν σιτίων δὲ ἀποκέκλειστο, ὕπνος δὲ ἀπελήλατο, ἀπορίᾳ δὲ εἴχετο, καὶ παλμοῖς συνεκόπτετο, a series of cola with 10-10-8-8-8 syllables, with four verbs of five syllables each in final position and four consecutive verbs ending in -το.

[48] For a detailed analysis of the scene from a liturgical point of view, see van de Paverd 1976: "A Text of Gregory of Nazianzus Misinterpreted by F.E. Brightman", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 42, 197-206.

[49] Cf. Coulie 1988: "Les trois récits de la tempête subie par Grégoire de Nazianze", in: Coulie (ed.), *Versiones orientales, repertorium ibericum et studia ad editiones curandas*, 157-180, and Stephanos Efthymiadis' chapter (12) in the present volume, p. 247.

amply testified in these vivid pictures of the local struggle for ecclesiastical power. But he also uses the opportunity to blame, in frank *parrêsia*, his two main addressees, namely his departed father and his present friend Basil, for forcing him to become a priest (37.7-16). Without caring any more for a smooth transition, he then briefly turns to his father's last illness and death (38).

"Such was his life, such its completion and perfection" (18.38.18-19)[50]. The encomium part of the oration is over, and it is time again for some sophistic play, or rather display, corresponding to the pseudo-oration to Basil at the start. This time the showpiece is an ekphrasis devoted to the church that the Elder Gregory built, and where apparently the funeral speech is being held (39). As an ekphrasis of a work of art, it is a rare thing in Gregory's works, but all the more exquisite in execution. It has been described as a masterpiece of its genre, "by its attention to technical detail, its plasticity of expression, the brilliance of its images" – the work of "a sophist more sophistic than the sophists themselves".[51] The dedication to Basil appears written in every word and sound. Delivered in the church it describes, in flickering light and accompanied by the orator's indicating gestures and glances, it must have appeared as the true climax of the oration, perhaps less easily recognized in our silent reading of it from the pages of a book. Just as the church itself is declared an appropriate "memorial (*mnêmosunon*) of [Gregory senior's] magnanimity ... left for posterity" (39.1), the verbal representation of it is no doubt intended as a perpetuation of that memory – of the temple (*neôs*) as well as the man.

The oration ends with three successive *prosphôneseis*, to the deceased who is blamed again at the end for his paternal "tyranny" (40), to Basil who is asked, appropriately enough, to judge the quality of the speech (41), and to Nonna, to whom the concluding *paramuthia* and *sumboulê* are addressed (42-43). Gregory the Elder whose own deficient rhetorical talents were exposed earlier in the speech,[52] and who is now, with refreshing self-irony, imagined as asking his son to stop speaking at last[53] – is thus celebrated with the longest and most sophisticated of Gregory's funeral orations,

[50] τοιοῦτος μὲν ὁ βίος αὐτῷ, τοιαύτη δὲ ἡ τοῦ βίου συμπλήρωσις καὶ τελείωσις.

[51] Guignet 1911, 208.

[52] 18.16.17-18 "while he bore off second prize in oratory (λόγου τὰ δεύτερα φέρων), he took the first in piety".

[53] 18.40.5-6 ὁρίζεις οἶδ' ὅτι· καὶ γὰρ αὐτάρκης [scil. ὁ λόγος], "You bid me cease, I know, for I have spoken long enough".

superseded only by that on Basil himself, composed some eight years later.

The successive development in this series of funeral speeches is clear enough. Gregory gradually transforms the pagan genre to fit his own purposes, talents and faith.[54] He suppresses the habitual parts he regards as improper for a Christian funeral, such as "beauty" and "lamentation", in the speech on Gorgonia "actions" as well; he expands the parts that allow genuinely Christian values to shine forth, such as "virtues" and "advice/prayers"; and he freely admits a number of new elements (or elements that had been only peripheral before), such as miracle stories, addresses, dramatic incidents, ekphrases. The speech on Caesarius is still rather conventional, while that on his father transgresses the form in almost every way. It does so, however, in a playful manner, with the standard topoi unmistakably alluded to, only to be transformed or negated.

What makes the speech on the Elder Gregory particularly memorable as a work of verbal art, apart from the brilliant sophistic display at the beginning and end, are the literary skills manifested in characterization and dramatization. His father's character emerges both through the colourful and subtly equivocal description of his various virtues and through the dramatic episodes from his private and public life, from his conversion through Nonna to his stubborn intervention in church politics almost from his deathbed. For an epideictic orator, Gregory largely keeps his own persona in the background in the narrative parts of all three speeches, in contrast to what will occur in his speech on Basil. Their character as funeral speeches, with the deceased in almost constant focus, is clearly perceptible throughout, in spite of the transformations, transgressions and sophisticated playfulness. Or because of them: the play is meaningful only within the framework of deep-rooted generic expectations.

[54] Cf. Agapitos 2003, 6, on the *epitaphios* as a classical genre moving away from the public towards the private domain, a "social narrowing" paralleled by a "literary broadening", opening up "its static representation of public life to include the dynamic narrative of private life". Gregory, in microcosm, mirrors this literary progress.

8

Life after death: The martyrdom of Gorgonia and the birth of female hagiography

Virginia Burrus

Gregory of Nazianzus' funeral oration for his sister Gorgonia seems to slip through the cracks of literary history, despite more than two decades of sustained interest in representations of women and rhetorics of gender in ancient Christian texts. The oration simply does not fit the available categories. Although its genre is easily identifiable (and identifiably "hellenistic"), a *woman* would appear to be no more a typical subject for public oratory in Gregory's Cappadocia than she would have been in Pericles' Athens.[1] Nor does Gregory's speech seem to have been successful in setting new trends for gender-bending within the genre, even among Christian writers. Admittedly, roughly a decade later Gregory of Nyssa had penned the epistolary "Life" of his own sister, Macrina; and a bit later still Jerome was successfully exploiting the possibilities of the letter of consolation for the memorialization of female subjects. Yet, as is frequently observed, none of these broadly biographical texts is framed as a funeral encomium, and all

[1] Loraux 1986: *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City* exposes the complex relation of the funeral oration to masculine gender: the funeral oration not only celebrates manly virtue but also represents a quintessentially masculine form of discourse, contrasting with the inarticulate lamentation of women. As Thucydides depicts Athenian funeral custom, "the female relatives are there to wail at the burial", while "a man ... pronounces an appropriate panegyric". In Thucydides' rendering of Pericles' funeral oration, "the subject of female excellence" is explicitly marked as off-limits: "greatest [glory] will be hers who is least talked of among the men whether for good or for bad" (*Peloponnesian War* 2.6). While it is possible that Gregory's choice to honor a woman with a funeral oration was less singular than it appears to us now, the fact remains that the only other funeral orations for women that survive from antiquity are those "for women associated with the [Roman] imperial household [that] form part of several histories", as noted by Susanna Elm in her chapter (9) in this volume – exceptions that seem (at least in part) to prove the rule.

of them celebrate women who were – unlike Gorgonia – followers of a recognizably ascetic style of life.

The differences between Gregory of Nazianzus' literary oration and other early Christian texts that likewise innovate by writing of the lives of women are indeed significant. At the same time, the tendency to frame distinctions in terms of genre – funeral oration versus biography, in this case – has paradoxically created not more but less order in the history of late antique literature, proliferating apparent anomalies by suppressing the actual diversity of compositional practice and the consequent plasticity and hybridity of literary forms. It may well be the case that to speak of genre at all, particularly in relation to late antiquity, "is to ask for trouble," as Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau warn. Regarding panegyrical and biographical literatures, they note that "it is precisely the transgression of the boundaries between them, their interaction and coalescence, that is most in evidence."[2] Once we have acknowledged the permeability and provisionality of generic boundaries, as Hägg and Rousseau rightly insist we must, we begin to see not only more differences between texts but also different similarities across texts. Similarities between Gregory's encomium of his sister and other near-contemporaneous narratives of women's lives have received remarkably little attention. Indeed, the persistent dubbing of Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina* as the first female hagiography effectively erases the Nazianzen's fraternal tribute from the history of female Lives, an erasure for which Pierre Maraval offers explicit generic justification: whereas the *Life of Macrina* is a philosophic biography, the encomium of Gorgonia is a funeral oration and thus (he implies) essentially incomparable.[3] The oration for Gorgonia will, however, take its place more comfortably in the history of women's Lives if we resist the temptation to view female hagiography as a stable or bounded genre with a clearly defined lineage. I would suggest that female hagiography is more helpfully understood not as the legitimate Christian daughter of biography (or of any other single genre) but rather as the collective effect of particular intertextual practices that transgress boundaries between genres promiscuously, producing a field of texts at once complexly overlapped and intricately differentiated.[4]

But it is possible to be a bit more precise than that. The Lives of holy women are first produced in the "interaction and coalescence" not only of panegyrical and biographical but also of martyrological and romance literatures. The particular relation of female hagiography to the romance has been recognized for some time (though Jerome's Lives of Paul and Malchus should be enough to remind us that some of the earliest male hagiographies *also* have close, and equally distinctly gendered, affinities with romance literature).[5] Less attention, perhaps, has been given to the partic-

[2] Hägg & Rousseau 2000b: "Introduction: Biography and Panegyric", in: Hägg & Rousseau (eds.): *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, 1-28, at 1. Regarding the subtle generic transgressions observable throughout Gregory's familial funeral orations, see also the chapter (7) by Tomas Hägg in this volume.

[3] Maraval 1971: *Grégoire de Nyssa: Vie de Sainte Macrine*, 22-23. In Elena Giannarelli's study of female hagiography, the oration is scarcely mentioned – not surprising, given that her typology (virgin, widow, mother) cannot accommodate the Life of a married woman who is not the author's mother (Giannarelli 1980: *La tipologia femminile nella biografia e nell'autobiografia cristiana del IVo secolo*). Her introduction to the Italian edition of Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina*, which she dubs "the first Christian biography dedicated to a woman", acknowledges only in a footnote the existence of "common features" between the Macrinan Life and the oration for Gorgonia, which predates the "first biography" by several years (Giannarelli 1988: *La vita di S. Macrina: Introduzione, traduzione, e note*, 26). Maraval 1997: "La Vie de sainte Macrine de Grégoire de Nysse: Continuité et nouveauté d'un genre littéraire", in: Freyburger & Pernot (eds.), *Du héros païen au saint chrétien*, 138, echoes Giannarelli's description of the *Life of Macrina* as "the first Christian biography dedicated to a woman", again rendering the oration for Gorgonia virtually irrelevant to the history of female hagiography. Susanna Elm's chapter (9) in this volume laudably departs from such a consensus by dubbing the oration for Gorgonia "the earliest hagiographic text in praise of a Christian woman"; Elm also makes a case for the "philosophic" spin of Gregory's depiction of Gorgonia.

[4] Perhaps *every* "genre" is the effect not of the mimetic reproduction of sameness but of the dialogical play of difference, the byproduct of the partiality and hybridity – of the movements of "interaction and coalescence" – that characterize all that we read. We glimpse genre only in hindsight; it is always elsewhere.

[5] Elizabeth Clark critically interrogates the influence of the romance on female hagiography, in the face of the overwhelming maleness of the biographical genre: "Although the Vitae of early Christian women stress their overcoming of femaleness and subsequent incorporation into a world of 'maleness,' it is still dubious whether the classical *bioi* furnished any fitting models for these *Lives*. And if they did not, did any other form of ancient literature, more focused on women, suggest itself as a more suitable model? Might not the Hellenistic romance, with its concentration on lively heroines, provide a better paradigm for a Vita like Melania's?" (Clark 1984: *The Life of Melania the Younger: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 155). Returning to the question more recently, Clark reaffirms that "the Vitae of early Christian women saints share many features with the relatively new genre of novels or romances popular in this period rather than with classical biography that focused on the public activity of statesmen and generals: women did not operate in a public, political sphere". She also notes, however, the influence of the philosophical biography, as measured by the fact that all ancient female hagiographical subjects are represented as teachers and purveyors of wisdom (Clark 1998: "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian After 'the Linguistic Turn'", *Church History* 67, 1-31, at 16, 22). I have explored the "romantic" aspects of Jerome's male hagiographies in chapter 1 of Burrus 2004: *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography*.

ular relation of female hagiography to martyrology. Although male saints too are frequently inscribed as metaphorical martyrs, we should not fail to note the distinctly perverse morbidity of the woman's Life. Erotically charged deathbed and funeral scenes, apparently optional ingredients in Lives of male saints, are indispensable in the biography of a woman, and such scenes are strikingly resonant with the tales of martyred virgins that are being elaborated in precisely the same historical moment.[6] Put simply, *a woman must die in order to get a Life*. She emerges as a narratable subject only when she has become a lamentable subject – which is also to say, a subject of desire. Her story is thus necessarily told by one who represents himself as knowing her intimately; as a result, there is a close link between female biography and male autobiography. To author a female Life is at once to lament and to love, but without satisfaction, ascetically, unendingly – even as *she* does. For the holy woman produced within ancient hagiographical literature is not only a martyr but also – and by the same fatal stroke – a bride of Christ, filled with desire for the Groom toward whom she rushes ecstatically in her moment of death.[7]

Read against the horizon of this emergent field of female hagiography, the historical significance of the speech for Gorgonia – its *innovativeness* as well as its *typicality* – becomes clearer. Gorgonia, we shall see, is a holy woman not because she converted to asceticism while remaining a wife in "real life" but rather because she is made over as a martyr – and thus also as a bride – in Gregory's startling oratorical performance. It is with this text, a decade earlier than Gregory of Nyssa's tribute to Macrina, and precisely *within its funereal performative context*, that a woman becomes the subject of a Life for the first time in the surviving literature of the ancient Mediterranean. Gorgonia's Life is, like all ancient Lives of women, a life after death, a *passionate* logos inscribing a sacrificial subjectivity, at once distinctly feminine and distinctly Christian – if also queerly classical. A *logos epitaphios* in drag, not only because celebrating a woman but also because veiled as a written text,[8] the oration for Gorgonia signals broader patterns

[6] Regarding tales of virgin martyrs, see Burrus 1995: "Reading Agnes: The Rhetoric of Gender in Ambrose and Prudentius", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3, 25-46.

[7] I offer a more extended treatment of this topic in chapter 2 of Burrus 2004.

[8] It is not known whether the oration was actually delivered, whether at Gorgonia's funeral or on the anniversary of her death – an act of public speech that would arguably have been still more transgressive than the publication of a written speech. Nonetheless, it is as part of Gregory's literary corpus that readers now encounter the "oration", and as such (I am suggesting) the text may be presented as an icon of the complex process by →

of literary Christianization, in which Gregory plays such a significant role, while also enacting the specific relation of the Life of a woman to the death of its subject.

*

"In praising my sister, I shall be honoring my own family", Gregory begins.[9] Familial pride, rather than fraternal grief, thus initially shapes the context of what will prove (for the most part) a decorously dry-eyed encomium.[10] It also poses an initial challenge that allows Gregory to reflect on his rhetorical task while at the same time showcasing his rhetorical skill. He acknowledges disarmingly that he may be suspected of falsehood where his own reputation is so clearly implicated in the praise of his subject. Yet his knowing listener will, he insists, stand as judge of the truthfulness of his discourse, alert to the possible pitfalls not only of too much praise of Gorgonia but also of too little. "And so I am not afraid of running beyond the bounds of truth, but, on the contrary, of falling short of the truth and

which the weight of an oral culture was shifted toward a culture of reading and writing. On the trend toward textuality, see Lim 1995: *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity*. That fourth-century Christian writing practices constitute a "feminization" of the classical *logos* is also a subtextual argument of Burrus 2000: *"Begotten, not Made": Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity*.

[9] English renderings of Gregory's funeral orations follow (with occasional modification) the translation of McCauley, S.J. 1953: *Funeral Orations by Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Ambrose*. The Greek text of *Or.* 8 (*In laudem sororis Gorgoniae*) is in *PG* 35.789-817. It is always worth remembering that Gregory's carefully wrought texts, even more than those of many other ancient authors, inevitably lose much in translation. Nonetheless, I shall avoid citations of the Greek except where clarification of the meaning seems to demand it.

[10] As Philip Rousseau and Jostein Børtnes each remind me, "familial" pride surely goes a long way toward explaining Gregory's impulse in writing this oration and perhaps the impulse of other authors of female Lives as well (even where the subjects are not literally family members): elite Christian men were not always graced with an abundance of appropriately Christian male subjects among their close relatives. This is a point well elaborated by Susanna Elm's chapter (9) in this volume: Elm suggests that Gregory, in his familial funeral orations, is quite carefully representing his family as a "philosophical" family in the service of his own self-construction as a Christian philosopher. Regarding Gregory's dry eyes, it should be noted that even classical funeral orations exhibit discomfort with the rhetorics of lamentation that might threaten to undercut emphasis on the felicity of a noble death, while Christian authors were further constrained by the need to affirm the positive gain represented by a passage to the afterlife. Gregory's meticulous observance of masculine decorum in this respect is balanced by his transgression in writing of a woman.

thereby lessening her reputation by an inadequate eulogy", he declares. Warming to his topic, Gregory protests, "Lack of relationship should not be an advantage and kinship prove to be a handicap". Truth, not familiarity, is the "standard and rule" by which his speech will be measured (*Or.* 8.1). Virtue always creates a debt of praise. This is all the more so, he suggests, in the case of those linked to the orator by the bonds of kinship or friendship. His discourse is, thus, "altogether necessary", a eulogy that constitutes at once "the last rites due to the dead" and an opportunity to instruct his audience by drawing them into an imitation of his sister's unadorned virtue, already anticipated in his own rhetorical mimesis of Gorgonia's ascetic simplicity in a text "spurning all prettiness and elegance in style" (*Or.* 8.3).

At first glance, this exordium appears unremarkable. Yet it is perhaps worth noting that none of Gregory's other funeral orations explicitly problematize the familiar relationship of the orator to his subject, though two others commemorate family members (his brother Caesarius and his father the elder Gregory) and a third celebrates the life of his close friend Basil. When Gregory comments in passing, "I trust I do not seem excessive in honoring my own family" in the oration for Caesarius (*Or.* 7.2), it is not to his honoring of his brother but to his honoring of his parents that he refers, and he seems, moreover, fully confident in his "trust". (Lamentation is rather a thematized difficulty in the oration for his brother.) His "personal knowledge of the departed" is represented not as a problem but as an advantage when he praises his father (*Or.* 18.4). In the case of Basil, it is not his speaking on behalf of a friend, but rather his delay in doing so, that he defends (*Or.* 43.2). The praise of these three men is thus performed with relative ease, where even "intimate" relationships are already part of the weave of public life. What is more difficult, the contrast with the oration for Gorgonia suggests, is the performance of praise for a *woman*, a rhetorical act that makes public what is properly private. Such a subtly transgressive exposure is only imaginable for one who can – like Gregory – claim the bond of kinship, yet at the same time the claim is itself barely representable. As Kate Cooper has shown, the "rhetoric of womanly influence" is a pervasive topos by which manly virtue is both attacked and defended in the agonistic theater of late ancient civic life;[11] the traditional insinuation of the off-stage or behind-the-scenes moral agency of women scarcely, how-

[11] Cooper 1992: "Insinuations of Womanly Influence: An Aspect of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy", *Journal of Roman Studies* 82, 150-64.

ever, facilitates (indeed, it arguably hinders) the public "outing" of the Life of a truly admirable woman. By explicitly problematizing *family honor*, Gregory thus elides the more particular rhetorical problem presented by *female gender*. Making "truth" his witness to the praiseworthy lives of those nearest to him ("kinship should not be a handicap"), he deftly lifts the veil that shrouds the privacy of a woman's virtue. Representing Gorgonia as "unadorned", stripped of the finery typically flaunted by aristocratic women, he boldly makes a spectacle of her very modesty.

Hers is the well-measured modesty not of a hysterical virgin but of a faithful wife and mother. Yet Gorgonia can be seen to unite the virtues of both "the married and the unmarried states", her brother asserts. Indeed, under the dizzying force of Gregory's rhetorical spin, marriage begins to seem the perfect ascetic practice for a woman who would cultivate not only modesty but also humility. What, after all, could be more chastening to pride than to bear the stigma of a housewife's lowly status, unambiguously marked as one who has renounced excitement in exchange for safety? (What indeed?) The glamour, the risk, and the glory are reserved for those who choose the single life – "more sublime and divine but more difficult and perilous", observes the bachelor brother knowingly. Gregory thus skilfully creates and sustains ambivalence, both exciting his readers with the thrill of "the unmarried state" and introducing the possibility that "the married state" is perhaps the more dauntingly ascetic (at least for women), and thus arguably the most thrilling after all. (The modern stereotype of the housewife reciting her own litany of sufferings, from which she is understood to derive both pleasure and power, is a common, if trivializing, contemporary rendering of this gendered rhetoric of marital ascesis.)[12] Not all wifely suffering is, however, productive, it would seem, and Gregory (laudably) does not uphold patriarchy as beneficial for wives on such grounds. Acknowledging that a life of sexual servitude and childbearing can indeed wear a woman down, Gregory rejoices that Gorgonia and her husband discovered that being married with children is not in fact incompatible with the practice of celibacy. Furthermore, properly managed, Christian marriage yields definite advantages for a woman who prefers to play the dominatrix. Having converted her husband from "an unreasonable master (*despotên atopon*)" into "a good fellow servant (*homodoulon*

[12] An excellent treatment of the asceticizing of marriage within late ancient Christian discourse is offered by Cooper 1996: *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*, 116-43.

agathon)", Gorgonia, as Gregory depicts her, rules the roost unchallenged: even after her death the force of her will lingers "as a silent exhortation to her house" (*Or.* 8.8).[13] But her rule, we should not forget, is above all self-rule: "Who had such control over her eyes? ... Who so derided laughter...? Who so barred the portals of her ears? ... Who so regulated her lips?" (*Or.* 8.9). Gregory does not run short of words for describing Gorgonia's impressive discipline. He gives much attention to her simplicity of dress, performing a kind of rhetorical strip-tease, as he lists one-by-one each of the items that does *not* adorn Gorgonia's body: gold jewelry, carefully curled tresses, "costly, flowing, diaphanous robes", glittering gems, artful facial cosmetics, and so on (*Or.* 8.10). We hear also of her extraordinary prudence and poise (*Or.* 8.11), acts of charity and hospitality (*Or.* 8.12), fastings, vigils, prayers. So much time does she spend on her knees that they have not only become callous but are imagined to have "grown into the ground" – almost as if Gorgonia has, like a figure in Greek myth, taken root as a tree (*Or.* 8.13).

As John McGuckin remarks, Gregory's "achievement in presenting this wealthy *matrona* as an impoverished ascetic is quite extraordinary".[14] Yet the asceticizing of Gorgonia is, in itself, not yet enough to inscribe sanctity and thereby make of Gorgonia a biographical subject. The telling achievement of Gregory's oration for Gorgonia, I would suggest, is in her inscription as a martyred bride, which overtakes and displaces her depiction as an

[13] John McGuckin detects in *Ep.* 86 signs of particular closeness between Gregory and Gorgonia's husband Alypius, contrasting with Gregory's relative coolness toward his sister (McGuckin 2001: *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, 26-27). Raymond Van Dam, on the other hand, proposes that Gregory and Alypius may never have met (Van Dam 2003: *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia*, 94). Whatever their actual relationship may have been, Gregory's representation of Gorgonia's husband in the oration seems to me markedly ambivalent. Earlier in the same passage (*Or.* 8.8) he has lauded Gorgonia for not failing to acknowledge her "first head" (Christ) despite the fact that she also had a husband as "head": such language hints at a potential conflict of loyalty while making clear that Gotgonia had her priorities straight. Now he more forcefully overwrites the carnal "head" as a "perverse tyrant", whose conversion to a "fellow servant" (to Christ) under Gorgonia's womanly influence can surely only be viewed as a beneficial chastisement from the christological perspective so strongly invoked. The description of the marriage of Nonna and the elder Gregory displays a contrasting lack of ambivalence: "he attached himself to the Lord, and she both called and considered her husband lord (*kurion*) and on that account she was in part justified" (*Or.* 8.4).

[14] McGuckin 2001, 166.

ascetic wife. In the later portions of the oration Gregory finally shows us a woman whom we are able not merely to admire for her virtue but to also to remember and indeed venerate for her passion. It is here that Gorgonia's representation as a *holy woman* eclipses (even as it also implicitly confirms) the celebration of family honor.

The transitional moment occurs in a series of climactic ejaculations with which Gregory's initial description of Gorgonia's regime concludes:

> O body uncared for, and garments bright with virtue alone! O soul, holding fast to a body all but deprived of food, as though it were immaterial, or, rather, being forced to die even before dissolution, that the soul might receive its freedom and not be fettered by the senses! O nights of vigil, and psalmody, and standing from sun to sun! O David, whose songs were never overlong for faithful souls! O tender limbs, thrown prostrate on the earth, and being hardened, contrary to nature! O fountains of tears, sown in affliction that they might reap in joy! O cry of the night, piercing the clouds and reaching to Him who dwells in heaven! O fervor of spirit, braving out of love of prayer the dogs of the night, the cold, the rain, the thunder, the hail and the darkness! O nature of woman which overcame that of man in the common struggle for salvation, and proved male and female a distinction of body but not of soul! O chastity preserved after baptism, and soul espoused to Christ (*tês numphês Christou psuchês*) in the pure bridalchamber (*en katharô numphôni*) of the body! O bitter tasting, and Eve, mother of our race and our sin, and deceitful serpent, and death, overcome by her abstinence! O emptying of Christ, and form of a servant (*kai doulou morphê*), and sufferings, honored by her mortification! (*Or.* 8.14)

In this highly poetic – as well as almost parodically hyperbolic – passage, Gorgonia is transformed into a soteriological figure of cosmic proportion. We "see" her now not in the wholeness of the figure of a fleshly woman but in a dazzling display of swiftly shifting images, at once partial and excessive in relation to such a "whole" – body and soul, standing or prostrate, limbs, tears, cries, prayers (reverberating with the elemental power of night, cold, rain, thunder, hail, darkness). At the same time, Gregory's theology of gender breaks the surface of his text. Ascetic practice becomes the arena for a contest of the sexes, in which Gorgonia's womanly nature overcomes man's – or rather, in which her surpassing virtue reveals that the human soul, unlike the body, is ungendered. Or is it? Gorgonia's soul, purified in baptism, becomes Christ's bride.[15] She is also represented (still in a dis-

[15] Cf. *Oration* 40, which is dedicated to the topic of baptism yet makes only scant reference to nuptial imagery (*Or.* 40.18, 46).

tinctly feminine guise) as a second Eve, reversing the fall by overcoming the serpent. Her Groom is the kenotic Christ of Philippians 2.7, self-emptying, slavish, suffering: as with her earthly husband, the *master* has become a *servant*, even as *her* will *overcomes* all opposition. If the hierarchy of gender is here not so much transcended as deconstructed, rendered both reversible and complex (as each sex carries more than a trace of the other, according to the aesthetic logic of the text), this conveys Gregory's more central interest in locating *Christian suffering* in the reversible and complex (as well as subtly erotic) play of activity and passivity, dominance and submission.[16]

Gregory showcases Gorgonia's suffering in two anecdotes culled from his sister's life. While the oration up to this point has seemed rather blandly vanilla, now it will receive its distinctive, even distinctly perverse, flavor. The first account is of a gruesome traffic accident. Gregory begins by insinuating that this event was front page news in the tabloids of its own day, as he refreshes memory with a few bold strokes. "You know the story of her mules getting out of control and running away with her carriage, and its dreadful overturn, how she was dragged along horribly and suffered serious injuries, and the scandal it became to unbelievers because the upright were allowed to suffer in this way, and the swift correction of their unbelief". Gorgonia is "crushed and mangled internally and externally (*kai aphanê kai phainomena)* in bone and limb", he recounts – not without relish. Despite the extent of her wounds, she does not allow any physician to attend her, due both to her extreme modesty ("she shrank from the eyes and hands of men, guarding her modesty even in suffering") and to her desire to have her faith vindicated. When she unexpectedly recovers, all are given to understand that "the tragedy had happened for her glorification through sufferings" (*Or.* 8.15). Thus Gregory has converted a potentially senseless accident into a triumphant spectacle of martyrdom through which Gorgonia gives witness to unbelievers. "O renowned and admirable misfortune! O suffering more sublime than freedom from suffering!" he gushes (*Or.* 8.16). (He has also perhaps revealed late antique Christianity in one of its most *perversely* "Platonic" moments, in this virtual parody of the philosopher's parable of the charioteer.)

Gregory pairs the tale of Gorgonia's public martyrdom with a tantalizingly "secret" witness, known only to himself and one other besides Gorgonia herself. (The public/private framing of the two stories replicates the mention of injuries both seen and unseen in the first story.) Again, we are shown Gorgonia in a state of extreme and even bizarre suffering, "grievously afflicted with a malady of a strange and unusual character", stricken with a "terrible disease" that does "not seem human" and cannot be cured by her merely human physicians. "All at once her whole body became fevered, with a heightening of the temperature and a racing of the blood, followed by a sluggishness inducing coma, incredible pallor, and a paralysis of mind and limbs". Sometimes these alternating spells of racing fever and dull paralysis are quite frequent. Driven to despair, Gorgonia finally submits herself directly to the care of the divinity. Visiting the church at night and allowing her tears to fall on the altar, "she anointed her whole body with her own medicine", a poultice of eucharistic elements mixed with her tears – a mingling of her own bodily fluids with Christ's body. She keeps her astonishing cure a secret – and perhaps not without good reason, as McGuckin points out: "At one stroke she has invaded the holy of holies of the church where the non-ordained were not supposed to tread, and dispensed with the clergy by ministering illegitimately to herself".[17] "Nor would I have divulged it even now, I assure you", Gregory professes, "were I not afraid to keep so great a wonder hidden" (*Or.* 8.18). The orator here again translates a potential scandal into a sign of holiness through the "wondrous" power of his own rhetoric.

Twice healed by the hands of her holy physician, Gorgonia seemingly desires death still more passionately than life. Or rather, she desires the physician himself, who offers the promise of a kind of "sexual healing" in the ecstatic experience of self-dissolution. "She longed to be dissolved, for she had great confidence in him who called her, and to be with Christ she valued above all the things of earth". The erotic intensity of her sublime longing is brought out by way of comparison with similar, albeit lesser, loves: "No one of the amorous and unlicensed so loves the body as she, having flung away these fetters and surmounted this slime with which we live, desired to be purely joined with her fair one and embrace her beloved (*erômenon*) completely, and I will even add, her lover (*erastên*)" (*Or.* 8.19). Christ is, then at once her beloved (in contemporary parlance, "bottom") and her lover ("top"), she both desiring and desired. Her asceticism has gradually prepared her for this moment, arousing her soul's fervor with

[16] See the chapter (4) in this volume by Stratis Papaioannou for a fuller, and complementary, discussion of the play (of both word and concept) between desire (*pothos*) and suffering (*pathos*) in Gregory's thought.

[17] McGuckin 2001, 29. Samuel Rubenson points out to me the resonance with Thecla's self-baptism in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*.

foretastes of Christ's beauty glimpsed in visions and dreams. Perhaps this is the key to her mysterious illness: she has been struck with the sickness of love. Now she is baptized, putting a seal on the "purification" and "process of perfection" toward which her whole life has been directed (*Or.* 8.20). We recall Gregory's earlier indication that it is in baptism that she is made Christ's bride (*Or.* 8.14): purification, then, is in preparation for a marriage. Is she not, however, already another man's bride? We recall also that her espousal to Christ follows upon her conversion to marital celibacy (*Or.* 8.14). As if in an attempt to bring Gorgonia's two "marriages" into a mimetic (and thus collusive) rather than a merely sequential (and thus mutually exclusive) relation, Gregory notes Gorgonia's desire – satisfied, by divine gift – that her husband should also be baptized before her death. Her husband seems, nonetheless, awkwardly intruded as a third party into the bridal chamber of Gorgonia's baptismal rite. The awkwardness is virtually thematized in Gregory's odd (not least because gratuitous) rhetorical dismissal: "If you wish me to describe him", he notes brusquely, "let me say that he was her husband, for I know not what further need be added" (*Or.* 8.20). If Gorgonia's husband – Gregory positively insists – is only worth mentioning because of his derivative glory, he is also perhaps subtly denigrated in his very claim to be a "husband" (an "unreasonable master"?) to a woman who is the very bride of Christ.[18]

Having been prepared in baptism, the bride is now bedded: "carrying out the usual law in this matter, she took to her bed". Gathering her family around her, "she discoursed beautifully on the future life, making her last day a day of solemn festival". Gregory's narrative arrives swiftly at her moment of death, though he does not resolve so swiftly how best to describe it: "Thus she was dissolved, or, better, taken to God, or she took wing, or changed her habitation, or departed a little before the body" (*Or.* 8.21). Immediately, he realizes he has closed this life a bit too soon. "Yet what a praiseworthy incident regarding her all but escaped me!" he interjects, even as the reader registers the calculated suspense introduced by his sudden "remembering". The climax is retroactively erased so that it can be repeated, and now more impressively. For the first time Gregory himself

[18] Cf. Gregory's baptismal oration, where he is less ambivalent in his assurance that even a married Christian may become Christ's bride. Indeed, with characteristic rhetorical bravado, he offers to perform the marriage ceremony himself: "I will join you in wedlock. I will dress the bride. ... I will imitate Christ, the pure groomsman and bridegroom, as he both wrought a miracle at a wedding, and honors wedlock with his presence" (*Or.* 40.18).

shows some emotion in relation to his sister's death: "But a shudder comes over me and tears arise when I recall the marvel". The "marvel" is teasingly subtle and therefore not so quickly described – indeed, it can only be represented in a delicately extended telling. Gorgonia is breathing her last. Her mother is bent over her, feeling the particular pain of a child's death preceding a parent's; other relatives and friends have likewise drawn close. A hush falls over the assembled group. With bated breath each strains to hear any final words Gorgonia might utter. Tears are choked back as awareness of her joy battles with grief at their own loss, adding further to the thickly suspenseful quiet. "There was a profound silence and her death took on the semblance of a sacred ceremony", Gregory writes, as he approaches the heart of the mystery. Gorgonia is so utterly still that it seems she must already be dead. Yet they linger nonetheless, suspended in the moment of holiness. Gorgonia's bishop is present, watching her closely because sensing that something wondrous is at work. He sees that her lips are moving, so slightly that no one else, evidently, has detected their motion. He leans closer and places his ear near her mouth. What he hears – just barely – is the last whispered line of a Psalm uttered with her last wisp of breath: "In peace I will lay myself down and I will rest". This then is the "marvel" that causes Gregory to tremble and weep: Gorgonia (for the first time in this text) speaks![19] And her speech, so long withheld, wields the power of a performative utterance, betraying the miracle of a self-proclaimed eulogy, delivered with sacramental momentousness in the instant of a death that is also the desired and welcomed womb of a life (*Or.* 8.22). Her marvelous speech enables Gregory's own; mimicking her voice, he speaks – in eulogy – of the life of a woman.

*

What is the point of dubbing this text – or any other, for that matter – the "first" female hagiography (which is, at it happens, also to say the "first" female biography in Western tradition). To claim a point of origin, typically, is to claim to define an essence – scarcely a fashionable intellectual stance these days, and arguably at odds with the spirit of my own call for an ascetic refusal of the temptation of a narrowly generic analysis. Nonetheless, I confess that a "strategic essentialism" vis-à-vis late ancient Lives of

[19] I thank Robin Darling Young for calling my attention to Gorgonia's pervasive *silence* in this oration. It is only as she enters the passage of death that she speaks.

women – one that recognizes its own provisionality – is indeed at work in this argument.[20]

To call Gregory's oration for Gorgonia the first female hagiography is – strategically – to highlight certain features of female hagiography more generally, while at the same time honoring more precisely the distinctiveness of Gregory's text. The first point I have wanted to highlight is the close connection of female hagiography to martyrology, which in turn attracts it to other death-centered writing practices, the (literary) funeral speech and the letter of consolation. From the perspective of hindsight, it is not altogether surprising that the funeral oration, traditionally a quintessentially masculine genre, ultimately proved less amenable than the letter of consolation, for example, to the articulation of a female subjectivity. Subsequent female hagiography, even when avoiding the genre of the public oration, will continue to betray sharp awareness of its own transgressiveness – but perhaps no author transgresses so boldly as Gregory.

Yet, from the perspective of hindsight, it is also revealing that a woman's life should first be spoken of in the implied context of her funeral. The funeral is where it all begins. Neither Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina* nor Jerome's epistolary commemoration of Paula (*Ep.* 108), for example, is a funeral oration, and each differs from the other in its particular generic hybridity. Yet each also concludes with a satisfyingly climactic account of the death and funeral of the woman, and in each case the conclusion arguably also has the character (from the perspective of a second reading) of a starting point. (The same might be said of Augustine's autobiographically-enfolded "Life" of Monica). It is from the vantage point of death that a woman's Life becomes writable, once Christianity has provided the lens through which the life after death may be imagined. Lamentation is women's work; and women can be lamented by the men who have loved them. To unite *logos* with lamentation, to make the subject of lamentation articulable, is the distinctive work of female hagiography. Through this work, the author (to the extent that he laments as well as praises) is at least partly feminized and the subject (to the extent that she is made the object of public praise as well as lamentation) partly masculinized.

[20] Having invoked Gayatri Spivak's much-cited language of "strategic essentialism", I would also note the discursive difference between an "origin" and a "beginning", a distinction helpfully articulated by Said 1975: *Beginnings: Intention and Method.* In Said's terms, my interest here is in marking an (active) "beginning" – a retrospectively acknowledged site of influential creativity – rather than inscribing a (suspiciously passive) "origin".

This is not to say that gender is transcended. If anything, gender is intensified in its very queering; it is also intensely eroticized. Like the virgin martyr of Prudentius' poem, who greets her sword-toting executioner lustily as "my lover, ... a man who pleases me at last" (*Peristeph.* 14), or the pseudo-virgin martyr of Jerome's proto-hagiographical letter who screams for more pain (even as her torturer's sword wilts disappointingly) (*Ep.* 1), the subjects of female hagiography meet their deaths eagerly in the eroticized persona of the bride of Christ, with their last breaths welcoming the embrace of their heavenly Groom. We have already heard – just barely – Gorgonia's "marvelous" citation of Psalm 4. Macrina concludes a densely intertextual address to her "beloved" with the cry: "For I, too, have been crucified with you, having nailed my flesh through fear of you and having feared your judgments" (*Vita Macrinae* 24). Jerome actually allows us to listen in on a sciptural dialogue between the saint and Christ: "As soon as Paula heard the bridegroom saying: 'Rise up my love my fair one, my dove, and come away: for, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone,' she answered joyfully 'the flowers appear on the earth; the time to cut them has come' and 'I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living'" (*Ep.* 108.29).

But the scene of death is also the site of a subtly eroticized encounter between the hagiographer and his subject. For Gregory of Nazianzus, the death scene is the point when tears and trembling finally overtake him, as he recognizes in Gorgonia's whispered words an effective self-speech that allows his own voice to merge momentarily with her own: he too will release secrets from their bond of silence (by the time we read of her death, he already has). Gregory of Nyssa outdoes his namesake, even as he repeats the trick – and not only by having his sister discourse from her bed in self-eulogy at far greater recorded length.[21] In his *Life of Macrina*, the revelation of a strikingly similar and equally secret healing takes place as he encounters his sister's corpse; her breast – which she, like Gorgonia, refused to allow even her physicians to see – is unveiled to his eyes to expose a mark just barely visible (even as Gorgonia's last words are just barely audible), in an almost shockingly intimate moment. Jerome, like Gregory of Nyssa, emphasizes the beauty of his saint's corpse and exposes himself in an act of explicitly feminized lamentation for his beloved. Much more could be said,

[21] On the importance of Macrina's own discourse for the authorization of Gregory of Nyssa's hagiographical voice, see Krueger 2000: "Writing and the Liturgy of Memory in Gregory of Nyssa's Life of Macrina", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8, 483-510.

of course, regarding erotic affinities between these Lives and others as well, and some of this work I have attempted elsewhere;[22] here the complex resonance between Gorgonia's and Macrina's Lives in particular compels our attention.

The second point I have wanted to highlight by positioning Gregory's oration as the "first" female hagiography is that the literary production of holiness and the following of an ascetic life are not simply related to one another as copy to original. They are perhaps better construed as parallel endeavors, as Derek Krueger has suggested, in his framing of hagiographical writing as itself a distinctly ascetic, as well as an explicitly cultic, activity through which not only the "saint" but also the author is produced as "holy".[23] Recognizing the particular ways in which hagiography constructs a female subject – *makes* a holy woman – may not only allow us to be more open to the legitimate success of Gregory's representation of his married sister as a saint, but also caution us against historically literalizing readings of the Lives of women.

Admittedly, the work of social historical reconstruction always exists in a necessary and productive tension with literary readings of ancient writings. Understandably and appropriately, the Lives of women have been eagerly mined for data that may contribute to the reconstruction of the history of women and family life in late antiquity. One danger that arises out of such an enterprise, however, is that the tension may be too quickly resolved on the side of an assumption of the historical transparency of the text. In the case of Lives of women, such a resolution often, ironically, results in a style of reading that is not merely insufficiently critical of the misogynistic assumptions of the text, but may even be inadvertently misogynistic in excess of the text's own assumptions. Let me take a few pages from John McGuckin's recent biography of Gregory as an example. McGuckin suggests that Gregory was "overawed and even a little bit upstaged by Gorgonia's severity in that vocation he had elected for himself", felt the need to apologize for the well-born Gorgonia's pungent "odor of virtue", was "taken aback by her boldness" in self-cure strategies that defied ecclesiastical protocol, and "puzzled" by the nature of her illness ("hysterical neurosis" is, as McGuckin notes, a diagnosis that might – but

[22] In chapter 2 of Burrus 2004, I discuss the "Lives" of Paula, Macrina, and Augustine's Monica.

[23] Krueger 1999: "Hagiography As Ascetic Practice in the Early Christian East", *Journal of Religion* 79, 216-32.

perhaps should not – tempt modern readers). He observes that "even in her sickness Gorgonia comes across as a dominant figure", calling attention to the marital restrictions posthumously imposed on her family members – above all, her husband – by bringing them to an early baptism that she herself had avoided. Finally, he surmises from the apparent lack of personal warmth in Gregory's narrative that "Gorgonia was a figure that the young Gregory could perhaps revere, but not bond with closely".[24] None of these psychologizing interpretations of family dynamics seems to me implausible.[25] Then again, none of them seems to me necessary, either, as my earlier reading of the text should make clear.[26] Though contemporary biographies no doubt share with late ancient hagiographies the aim of creating "a meaningful relationship between the living and the dead",[27] what constitutes meaning for different ones of us will vary greatly and will never of course be exactly the same as what constituted meaning for Gregory and his earliest readers. If my own reading of Gorgonia – both more positive and less positivistic – has any particular merit, it is certainly not because it is any less my own projection than is McGuckin's (on the contrary! I'll warrant it is more so), but rather because of the relative (im)modesty of its mimetic ploy – to which I return briefly in closing.[28]

To write the Life of a woman – whether Gorgonia, Macrina, Paula, or

[24] McGuckin 2001, 28-30.

[25] Yet, as Kari Børresen reminds me, a convincingly *feminist* psychologizing reading would have to take more fully and explicitly into account the source of female "neurosis" where a woman is "put in an impossible situation" – namely, the not unfamiliar double-bind of one required to be at once maternal and ascetically asexual.

[26] Not "necessary" because the features of Gregory's text that McGuckin explains with reference to Gorgonia's particular personality can at least as plausibly be attributed to Gregory's literary context and agenda. Nonetheless, McGuckin's "strong" reading of the Oration for Gorgonia, however positivistic, is more revealing of its complex textual dynamics than is Van Dam's blandly reasonable (and admittedly also persuasive) suggestion that the oration – consisting in generic idealizations seamed together with a couple of second-hand stories – simply reveals that Gregory did not know his sister very well (Van Dam 2003, 93-96).

[27] Momigliano 1971: *The Development of Greek Biography*, 104.

[28] On the relation of mimesis to feminine subjectivity, see Irigaray 1985: *This Sex Which is not One*, 76: "To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself ... to ... ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make 'visible,' by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible; the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language".

another – was for a late ancient author already to transgress genres by bending genders and thereby to mark the biographized woman with the ambivalence of a transgressive – an inherently *excessive* – subjectivity.[29] "Neurotic" in her extraordinary capacity, indeed her active desire for suffering, "dominant" (and thus domineering) in her improbable focus of purpose and strength of will, at once too passive and too active *(simply too much)* – are these not the marks of a holy woman, that is to say, of a woman who *suffers writing* (despite her generic unwritability) and thereby *breaks* (thus also releases) *the very power of the masculine logos*? *Logos epitaphios* in praise of a woman, a hellenistic genre in drag, is also a fitting figure of Christian speech – a violated as well as a violating Word, ever converting suffering into the creative matrix of new beginnings.

[29] As Charles Lock points out to me, Gorgonia's very name signals the monstrosity of the female subject.

9

Gregory's women: Creating a philosopher's family

Susanna Elm

I groan for having dropped the reins of a devout people,
not having rejected them, but in no way having them in hand;
a people that before exulted in my homilies
because from my tongue the triple light shone forth.
But now, as a weaning infant in the arms of his mother
Pulls on a dry nipple
With his thirsty lips, but his desire is disappointed by his mother,
So also from my tongue the people are suspended,
Yearning for more of the previous flowing spring,
From which now their ears have not even a little juice.
Others gush forth a sweet stream, but those listening
Grieve, for they do not have the speech of their father.[1]

"In the late Roman empire", to cite Virginia Burrus, "theological discourse came to constitute a central arena in which manhood was not only tested and proven, but also, in the course of events, redefined: … . Masculinity … was conceived anew, in terms that heightened the claims of patriarchal authority while also cutting manhood loose from its traditional fleshly and familial moorings".[2] The poem cited above, written fairly soon after 381 (and certainly before 389/90) by none other than Gregory of Nazianzus, illustrates Virginia Burrus' point. Gregory wrote these lines of elegiac verse while in retirement at Nazianzus, after having resigned as bishop of Constantinople. The themes to which these lines allude recur in many of his autobiographic poems composed during the same period, and they are easy to comprehend: Gregory conceived of himself as both father and mother to

[1] Greg. Naz. *Carm.* 2.1.50.29-40. Trans. Abrams Rebillard 2003: *Speaking for Salvation*, 24-25.18-38.

[2] Burrus 2000: *"Begotten, not Made"*, 3.

his congregation.[3] The congregation in question was that of the Anastasia, his original community in Constantinople.[4] As Gregory laments, this community was now in the hands of others. It was thus orphaned, because loosing Gregory meant that it had lost both father and mother. Indeed, it was now left to the hostile care of foster-parents. Gregory himself, of course, was now childless, *ateknos* (*Carm*. 2.1.5.9). As he declares in another elegiac, autobiographic poem, "I found faithlessness, bereft of my children, giving way to grief, this is the existence of Gregory. ... Write this on stone". (*Carm*. 2.1.92.9-12).[5] As a bereft parent mourning the loss of his children, Gregory wants to be remembered on his own funeral stele.

Gregory's women

The poignant lines of *Carm*. 2.1.92 bring into sharp focus some of the issues at the center of contention and debate for many who participated in constituting what we may now call the new masculinity of late antique Christianity. As asceticism began to gain ground, and celibate men increasingly held key positions in the ecclesiastical, as well as in the imperial hierarchy, the obvious question was whether or not such men, deprived of "objects for the sexual demonstrations that proved their right to call themselves men", could be considered men at all.[6] More to the point, on what grounds ought they to be the men who governed others who did possess such "demonstrable objects", namely children? And given that they did exercise authority over other men who clearly were men, what did that say about notions of masculinity? Further, Gregory's poem indicates, merging

[3] Abrams 2003 has translated most of these poems for the first time into English, though English translations of select poems are available by McGuckin 1986: Gregory of Nazianzus, *Selected Poems* (*Carm*. 2.1.24, 25, 69, 70, 76 and 77); White 1996: Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poems* (*Carm*. 2.1.11, 19, 34, 39, and 92); and Gilbert 2001: *On God and Man* (*Carm*. 2.1.6, 21, 39, 45, and 78). For Gregory after Constantinople see McLynn 1997: "The Voice of Conscience: Gregory Nazianzen in Retirement", in: *Vescovi e pastori in epoca Teodosiana*, 299-308, and Elm 1999: "Inventing the 'Father of the Church': Gregory of Nazianzus' 'Farewell to the Bishops' (*Or*. 42) in its Historical Context", in: Felten & Jaspert (eds.), *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter*, 3-20.

[4] *Carm*. 2.1.5 and 6; Abrams 2003, 18-38; McGuckin 2001: *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, 241-243, and Snee 1998: "Gregory Nazianzen's Anastasia Church", 157-186, on the Anastasia, with further references.

[5] Trans. Abrams 2003, 28; McGuckin 2001 comments on the feminine imagery used by Gregory at 6 n. 23.

[6] McNamara 1994: "The *Herrenfrage*", in: Lees (ed.), *Medieval Masculinities*, 3-29 at 5.

as it does the roles of father and mother, that gender is not a fixed category and was not necessarily perceived as such in the ancient world. As Maud Gleason has shown in the context of the so-called Second Sophistic, "manliness was no birthright. It was something that had to be won" through various "opposing ways of masculine comportment" that carefully constructed a man's manliness and character through movement, stance, voice and the expression of the eye.[7] In other words, gender was and is performative, as is so eloquently argued by Judith Butler, created through "bodily gestures, movements, and styles".[8] Yet, in any construction of masculinity fatherhood plays a central role. And, as Gregory's poems 2.1.50 and 92 further indicate, fatherhood is a multivalent force. Gender and its central aspects are performed as well as socially determined.[9] The role of the father "is not a one-man show, but rather part of the social drama of family life. To perform fatherhood, in other words, one must be joined on the stage by someone enacting the role of the child", as well as that of the mother.[10]

Gregory, I would like to argue, was fully aware of that dilemma. So much so that he wrote for himself an entire family. This family consisted of his own children, his congregations at Constantinople but also at Nazianzus, for whom he was both father and mother – and through whom he thus acquired the fullest kind of humanity possible, one that encompassed both paternity and maternity in one.[11] But, as I would like to argue further, this elevated kind of humanity, resulting from his merged paternity and maternity, was predicated on a prior step. In order to gain the authority necessary to persuade others to join him on the stage as children, accepting him as their father and their mother, he himself needed to demonstrate that he originated from a family that was capable of imbuing him with the powers he now displayed. Inevitably, Gregory's first step had to be, and indeed was, the creation of his own family as a guarantor of his own, fully realized masculinity. This masculinity was a masculinity which had to be perceived

[7] Gleason 1995: *Making Men*, xvii-xviii, and passim.

[8] Butler 1990: *Gender Trouble*, 140. Contrary to the subversiveness implied by Butler's analysis of modern "gender bending", that of Gregory, I would argue, has nothing subversive about it. On the contrary, in his case, it expresses a doubly potent masculinity which also encompasses feminine fecundity, see below. See also Clark 1999: *Reading Renunciation*, 138-140, on "gender bending" in the context of scriptural exegesis.

[9] As Butler argues more forcefully in Butler 1993: *Bodies That Matter*, x-xii, 1-16.

[10] McLaughlin 1999: "Secular and Spiritual Fatherhood in the Eleventh Century", in: Murray (ed.), *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities*, 25-43 at 36-37.

[11] See for example *Carm* 2.1.50; also *Carm*. 2.1.45; Abrams Rebillard 2003, 17-87.

as more authoritative than that of other, competing men, precisely because it included a very specific aspect of the feminine, namely maternity. Hence, it was a masculinity that included more than one fecundity, that of the father as well as that of the mother (including all the social aspects both roles implied). However, neither such a doubly fecund masculinity, nor the kind of family that brought it forth and guaranteed it, were completely new or specific to Christians at that time: both were present in the role of the philosopher in its late antique incarnation. Hence, Gregory re-created his own family as a philosophical one, and this new philosophical family was intrinsically linked to Gregory's creation of his own life as a specific kind of philosophical life. Indeed, writing his family as a philosophical one formed a crucial part in the latter enterprise. So crucial, I would argue, that the aim was two-fold: first, to create new models for a Christian philosophical life – the Christian public man as "philosopher, even in the *chlanis*", to cite the famous phrase from the funeral oration for Caesarius (*Or.* 7.11.1), the Christian married couple, the Christian spouse and mother – but second, and even more importantly, to cement and promote Gregory the philosopher himself. Thus, in writing his own family as a philosophical one Gregory, while creating models for new Christians as well as a new literary genre (Gorgonia's funeral oration is arguably the earliest hagiography of a woman), also created a new masculinity and femininity for himself.[12]

In arguing such a point, I would like to stress again that it is worth asking to what degree the new masculinity to which Gregory thus contributed was a Christian phenomenon. Certainly, early Christian writers played a crucial role, but did they "adopt a radically transcendent ideal of manhood that commands more of the cultural authority of virility than the traditional roles of father or husband, soldier or statesman, orator or philosopher"? Could only "the credal formula, 'begotten, not made', give birth to a new patriliny, as masculinized, sexualized, and pluralized theological metaphors are balanced against the one God's transcendence of a humanity defined by sexual difference and the generative flux of flesh"?[13] In other words, though much recent scholarship has linked the emergence of

[12] See Virginia Burrus in the present volume, ch. 8; and much like Gregory of Nyssa as shown by Burrus 2000, 82-84, 96-97 and 188; and Meredith 1995: *The Cappadocians*, 52.

[13] Burrus 2000, at 5 and 3, also 57-58, and 185-193; Burrus' concerns and aims are different ones, of course, playing and taking issue as much, if not more so, with contemporary theory as with theology, for example as represented by Frances Young; see also Burrus, 12-17.

a new masculinity to Christianity, it remains worthwhile to reconstruct the historical context of some of the fundamental texts that elucidate this new masculinity beyond their Christian enclosure.[14] But before entering the fray, it may be helpful to step back and survey briefly recent scholarship on masculinity in late antiquity with a view to positioning Gregory's role in that discussion.

Gregory and the discourse on masculinity

Gregory of Nazianzus, despite his prodigious output, figures relatively rarely in the many recent discussions about the creation of new men in late antiquity. In part, this absence simply reflects the fact that most of the recent works that thematize the issue in greater detail, for example those by Viginia Burrus, Gillian Clark, Kate Cooper, and Matthew Kueffler, focus to a greater extent on Latin rather than Greek authors, with Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine figuring prominently.[15] When they do incorporate Greek authors, then Gregory of Nyssa and indeed Basil of Caesarea hold pride of place, partly as the result of an aspect of historiography to which I shall return presently. Yet, most of these works on masculinity and the issues they address have a more far-reaching trajectory, rooted in discussions of asceticism, and as such are also deeply related to issues of women and femininity. As Jo-Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple argued thirty years ago in relation to the fifth through the twelfth centuries, the restructuring of gender systems, such as is argued for the fourth century, is never exclusively a "*Herrenfrage*".[16] Even if, as Elizabeth Clark has recently shown, men primarily use(d) women "to think with", their thoughts also

[14] Widdicombe 1994: *The Fatherhood of God*, 1, 5, 177-78 and 258, similarly aligns the systematic elaboration of divine fatherhood with the fourth century, specifically with Athanasius; Burrus' arguments, esp. 48-51, are thankfully corrective of Widdicombe's somewhat "bodiless" notion of paternity.

[15] Kueffler 2001: *The Manly Eunuch*, focuses explicitly on the West, supposing that "many of the same conclusions might be drawn" elsewhere, 9; Clark 1998: "The Old Adam: The Fathers and the Unmaking of Masculinity", in: Foxhall & Salmon (eds.), *Thinking Men*, 170-82; Cooper 1996: *The Virgin and the Bride*; these are selective rather than comprehensive citations. Feichtinger & Wöhrle (eds.) 2002: *Gender Studies in den Altertumswissenschaften* I, focuses on non-Christian sources, with the exception of the honorary pagan Synesius, but see Feichtinger's overview-introduction, 11-23.

[16] McNamara & Wemple 1973: "The Power of Women through the Family in Medieval Europe, 500-1100", *Feminist Studies* 1, 126-41.

necessitate(d) a concurrent "*Frauenfrage*", regardless of the actual repercussions on real-life women in the periods concerned.[17] Thus, it is not surprising that in late antique studies, just as in studies of the middle ages, issues of masculinity are gaining a central position in scholarship after many years of in-depth discussion regarding the role of women. Even in many studies on asceticism and women and their roles, Gregory rarely appears in a focal position. Of course, he is discussed as one of the three Cappadocians, but his appearance is frequently confined to a supporting role.[18] Given the fact that he wrote arguably the first life of a female "saint" and contributed significantly to the theoretical underpinnings of asceticism, his scant presence in the scholarly literature on issues of gender is certainly surprising. This is all the more so when we consider the dominant aspects of Gregory's historiographic persona.

Gregory is a composite of several historiographic personalities.[19] The most dominant persona, overshadowing all others, is that of Gregory the Christian. Within the compass of that super-persona, one may discern several sub-personae, of which Gregory "the Theologian" and co-architect of Neo-Nicene orthodoxy, and Gregory as the abject ecclesiastical failure, are the most important ones, especially for the present context, partly because they also mirror different notions of masculinity as privileged in scholarly discourses. As far as the persona "Gregory the Theologian" is concerned, most scholars would echo Raymond Van Dam's sentiment, namely that Gregory was "a man whom contemporaries and subsequent readers admired for the fluency of his theological treatises about the nature of the Trinity". In that regard Gregory was a "manly" man, whose claim to fame admits little ambiguity. Yet, and here the second historiographic aspect comes into play, namely that of the ecclesiastical failure, he was at the same time also a man "who 'stuttered' as he remembered and recorded memories about himself".[20]

[17] Clark 1998: "The Lady Vanishes", *Church History* 67, 1-31; Cooper 1996, 13-14.

[18] Here the work of Verna Harrison is exceptional, e.g. Harrison 1996: "Gender, Generation, and Virginity in Cappadocian Theology", *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS 47, 38-68.

[19] For a more detailed discussion see Elm 2003: "Hellenism and Historiography: Emperor Julian and Gregory of Nazianzus in Dialogue", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33:3, 493-515, at 497-499.

[20] Van Dam 1995: "Self-representation in the Will of Gregory of Nazianzus", *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS 46, 118-148 at 140.

Almost the entire scholarly literature on Gregory,[21] while supporting the notion of Gregory as a "fluent" theologian, has also characterized Gregory the priest and bishop, that is, Gregory the public person, as a highly ambiguous and ambivalent man. In that capacity, he is seen as a sensitive soul or *romantique avant la lettre*, as indecisive or pusillanimous. For McGuckin, he was "vulnerable throughout his life to the demands or expectations of others. ... His power of introspection and innate sensitivity came at the price of a plasticity of character, insecure anxiety and vacillation ...", results of a young man's resistance to his overbearing (formerly pagan) father and over-identification with his (always Christian) mother, neither aspect being conducive to "manly" masculinity.[22] Raymond Van Dam's own recent work clearly emphasizes Gregory's role as a family man, seen here, however, more strictly in the context of patronage. In his assessment, "Gregory had never distanced himself from his parents, his family, and his relatives. His devotion to his father in particular was always a dominant influence in his life. Even in his final years he continued to follow Gregory the Elder's lead, as bishop and patron ... , then as the patriarch of an extended family". As Van Dam specifies elsewhere, "Gregory's image of himself [was] primarily that of a son", devoted and obedient, whose own off-spring were his writings, and "whose one true love had always been his mother" – again a somewhat problematic kind of masculinity.[23] Thus, most scholarly portraits of Gregory as a public persona – i.e. those not focusing primarily on his theological thought – reflect implicitly or explicitly a disquiet with the less "stable" aspects of his masculinity. Few consider him an unambiguous model, a fact that may have contributed to his playing second fiddle to Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa. Few, furthermore, (with the exception of David Konstan and Jostein Børtnes) comment explicitly on the ways in which Gregory himself contributed towards the

[21] Excluding the work of Neil McLynn and that of Leonardo Lugaresi, but including, though with modification, John McGuckin. See e.g. McLynn 1998: "A Self-Made Holy Man: The Case of Gregory Nazianzen", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, 463-483; McLynn 1997, 299-308; Lugaresi 1993: *Gregorio Nazianzeno. In Julianum invectivae duae*, 7-53; Rousseau 1994: *Basil of Caesarea*, 86-87.

[22] McGuckin 2001, 1-34 and passim, quote at 34.

[23] Van Dam 2003: *Families and Friends*, 58, 46, 93.

construction of this ambivalent masculinity, even less on the context of its late antique development.[24]

Indeed, the reconciliation of this duality – on the one hand the fluent theologian, on the other a pliable, vacillating man who stuttered when writing about himself – poses a historiographical problem. The root of this problem lies in the very manner in which Gregory wrote his own life and in one of the central themes of that work, namely the continuing struggle between the *bios theoretikos* and the *bios praktikos*. In short, for Gregory, from his very first to his last writings, the nature of the "true" philosophical life – as the correct and appropriate mixture of retreat and involvement in the affairs of the community – was at stake. In Gregory's case, the exegesis of this classic Platonic and Aristotelian theme has given rise to numerous discussions (more often than not thinly disguised attempts at psychology), not least because it has been read exclusively in "Christian" terms: as the struggle of a man burning with desire for ascetic retreat, yet forced against his will into priestly office and the unsavoury world of Church politics. Because Gregory is considered above all to be a Christian, his discussions of the philosophical life have been read and translated into an entirely "Christianized" idiom, that of asceticism and monasticism. Therefore they have remained, as I have discussed elsewhere, hermetically sealed off from other debates about the "true" philosophical life concurrent among Gregory's non-Christian contemporaries.[25] A parallel development may be observed with regard to discussions about the "new masculinity" associated precisely with the ascetic life for which Gregory's writings are so crucial. Here Gregory may stand as axiomatic. As mentioned above, most modern works on the new masculinity focus exclusively on Christian writers, i.e. they posit a new masculinity as a specifically Christian phenomenon. To be sure, scholars highlight the fact that Christian authors drew in its construction on earlier, non-Christian traditions, most importantly on classical philosophical traditions filtered through the Second Sophistic. In such scholarly discussions, however, the impact of those traditions remains frequently an issue of the past, i.e. discussed as part of the available tool-kit of a shared

[24] Konstan 2000: "How to Praise a Friend: St. Gregory of Nazianzus's Funeral Oration for St. Basil the Great", in: Hägg & Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, 160-179; Børtnes 2000: "Eros Transformed: Same-Sex Love and Divine Desire: Reflections on the Erotic Vocabulary in St. Gregory of Nazianzus's Speech on St. Basil the Great", ibid., 180-193.

[25] Elm 2003, 497-499.

paideia.[26] Almost none of the scholars engaged in the discussion of late antique constructions of manhood or masculinity, especially as performed by Gregory of Nazianzus, cite any works by a non-Christian author who may have been engaged in similar tasks at the same time – as if by this time pagans and Christians no longer shared a culture.[27] With that in mind it is time to finally address Gregory and his creation of a philosophical family, in its context.

Made men

"Making men" was a performative act that found its main resonance in written texts, and we are only able to infer through reading what moved those who wrote. However, as R.R.R. Smith has pointed out, the early years of the fourth century were, among many other things, an unusual "period of highly-charged visual re-orientation".[28] Smith elaborates this observation by focusing on two quite distinct modes of imperial representation, which embody opposite extremes of imperial self-presentation and hence opposing notions of imperial masculinity: one chosen by Licinius, the other by Constantine. Such contesting imperial ideals, as Smith likewise points out, also affected the manner in which public officials throughout the empire styled themselves – and they may therefore function as a visual short-hand for a period, in which diverging types of manliness came under particular debate.[29] At one end of the spectrum stands a rather unusual fat-faced portrait of Licinius I, a colossal head from Ephesus, on the other the better known thin-faced head of Constantine, now in the Palazzo Mattei at Rome.[30] Licinius' portrait highlights some inter-

[26] Cooper 1996 and Kueffler 2001, for example, highlight the non-Christian traditions; see also Habinek 1998: *The Politics of Latin Literature*, 136-150; Richlin 1997: "Gender and Rhetoric: Producing Manhood in the Schools", in: Dominik (ed.), *Roman Eloquence*, 90-110.

[27] Including Van Dam 2003 in his assessment of the role of virginity, 114-125.

[28] Smith 1997: "The Public Image of Licinius I: Portrait Sculpture and Imperial Ideology in the Early Fourth Century", *Journal of Roman Studies* 87, 170-202, quote at 170.

[29] Smith 1999: "Late Antique Portraits in a Public Context", *Journal of Roman Studies* 89, 155-189.

[30] Marble portrait head from Ephesus, Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum, first published by L'Orange 1933: *Studien zur Geschichte des spätantiken Porträts*, 76-77, 144, n. 105 and figs 199-200; and the marble head of Constantine, Palazzo Mattei, Rome, also discussed by *inter alia* L'Orange 1984: *Das spätantike Herrscherbild von Diokletian bis zu den Konstantin-Söhnen 284-361 n. Chr.*, 55-56, 126-127, plates 39a-b; Smith 1997, plates I and XII.

esting features. The elderly-looking emperor sports big eyes, short cropped hair, a lightly stubbled beard and a smile, and he is clearly corpulent. Constantine's portrait, in contrast, shows him as clean shaven with a straight mouth, lean and youthful-looking. Both portrait heads are court authorized; that of Licinius is a copy of a centrally-provided prototype. Thus, as indicated above, both heads form part of "an expanded range of imperial portraiture with contrasting personal images and different formal styles", which signify, especially when read in concert with contemporary panegyrics and coins, competing notions of imperial manhood that also comment explicitly on what had preceded them.[31] Licinius' portrait emphasizes the virtues of a military man. Corpulence was the sign of an honest and weighty presence, of vitality, order, "stout strength" and "total bodily vigor", all necessary for a man whose job involved the tireless defence of the empire. Hence also the cropped hair and the stubble of a beard: no man engaged in such pressing military endeavors had time to spare for a careful coif.[32] The exaggerated smile belongs likewise to the iconographic vocabulary of the ideal military leader, especially in its tetrarchic incarnation. Diocletian in particular knew the importance of accessibility as an imperial virtue, especially crucial in interacting with his soldiers but sufficiently expansive to include everyone else in the realm. Diocletian wished to be and was seen as affable and jovial, and Licinius' pronounced smile indicates the same intention.[33] As Smith points out, Licinius' smile was programmatic, suggesting that he had introduced a new, "joyful" area of "joyous victories" (*victoriae laetae*), where *felicia tempora* once again reigned.[34] His exaggerated, wide open eyes, his *fulgor oculorum* (12.19.6), also adapt a stylistic concept introduced in the tetrarchy. They project an imperial majesty that was all seeing and eternally, untiringly vigilant, a topos intensely elab-

[31] Smith 1997, 176-179, 184-187, quote at 184.

[32] See for example the *Latin Panegyrics* 11.3.9, in: Nixon & Rodgers (eds.) 1994: *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini*. All references to Latin panegyrics marked in brackets in the following are to this edition. Smith 1997, 178-179, 187-194, 196-197 n. 157.

[33] Even Lactantius *De mort. pers.* 18.10 commented that Diocletian "industria militari et probis moribus et comitate singulari a militibus amaretur." One of the panegyrics later praised Constantine's accessibility, speaking of his "faciles aditus ... aures patientissimas, ... hilaritate admixta" (*Pan. Lat.* 4.34.4), Nixon 334-342; Elsner 1995: *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 173-176.

[34] Bruun 1966: *The Roman Imperial Coinage* VII, 736-739, 754; Smith 1997, 197-198.

orated in the panegyrics.[35] According to one panegyrist, the emperor received divine support because he saw everything (12.4.1), and he therefore received visions and epiphanies that remained occluded to all others (6.21; 4.11.4; 11.3.9). More keenly even than the sun itself, the emperor "look[s] to the future for the well-being of nations not only with those eyes which animate [his] immortal countenances, but much more with those eyes of [his] divine mind" – the personification of the ideal *providentia* (8.4.3; also 5.2.3; 12.8.3).[36] Thus, Licinius' portrait, perhaps issued in conjunction with his son's accession as Caesar in 317, reflects a basic tetrarchic style with strong personalized features, and stands in conscious contrast to that of Constantine during the same period, i.e. between 310 and 324.[37]

Constantine's portrait, although it shares with Licinius' the imperial *fulgor oculorum*, presents an entirely different imperial masculine ideal. In contrast to the soldierly aspects of Licinius with its echoes of the tetrarchy, he is represented as a youthful looking, thin, clean-shaven civilian, his hair carefully brushed over the brow.[38] Constantine thus consciously evoked Augustus, and just like the first *princeps* Constantine, too, is described as "youthful, joyful, bringer of well-being, most handsome", with all the concomitant associations of regeneration and renewal, *lux perpetua* and *beata tranquilitas*.[39] After 325, once Licinius had been beaten, Constantine's image changed again. It now echoed that of "hellenic kings", still clean shaven, with large eyes and the hair brushed forward in a neat fringe, still

[35] Smith 1997, 198; *Pan.* 12 belongs to the panegyrics of uncertain date and authorship; it was addressed to Constantine, perhaps in 313.

[36] Smith 1997, 199-200.

[37] Smith 1997, 190-191; Chantraine 1982: "Die Erhebung des Licinius zum Augustus", *Hermes* 110, 477-487; Kolb 1995: "Chronologie und Ideologie der Tetrarchie", *Antiquité Tardive* 3, 21-31.

[38] According to the panegyrists, Constantine, too, shared all of the aspects of military valor attributed to Licinius; it was their aim to attribute all virtues to all emperors. The statues, especially of the 310s, however, point to the different emphasis, and the panegyrists begin to add other virtues, especially that of *tranquilitas* (6.4.4; 4.5.4) during that period as well, Smith 1997, 200-201 and 185-187.

[39] *Iuvenis, laetus, salutifer, pulcherrimus* (6.21.4-6). C.'s representation echoes especially the later versions of Augustus' main coin type; *Pan. Lat.* 8.4.3 for *lux perpetua* and 6.17.4 and 12.7.5 for his looks; Bruun 1966: *Roman Imperial Coinage* VII, 729; Wright 1987: "The True Face of Constantine the Great", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41, 493-507, at 494-496; L'Orange 1984, 54-57.

radiating an Augustean tranquility, but now combined with the characteristic "royal" diadem.[40]

This new imperial style "defined at one stroke the *sacer vultus* of the late Roman emperor".[41] This was the ideal imperial image also favored by Constantine's sons, and soon became so clearly identifiable as imperial as to confine the iconic vocabulary of the stubbled or lightly bearded, elder-looking man (though frequently with a fuller, more carefully tended fringe of hair) to the self-representation of local public officials.[42] Indeed, no further contest of imperial forms of masculinity occurred until the early 360s and the brief rule of Julian. Early coins, dating from his accession as Caesar in 355, portray Julian in the classic later Constantinian style just mentioned, with the fringed hair and the diadem.[43] But once he became the legitimate sole ruler, after 361, Julian's public portraits as represented by his coins begin to change: in addition to the diadem, the emperor's effigy now always displays longer hair and, most importantly of all, a beard. This beard is not the military stubble of the corpulent Licinius, but the full-length beard all knew to associate with the philosopher.[44] However, the obverse of these coins frequently coupled the bearded ruler with military notions, e.g. the legend *virtus exercitus Romanorum*, or *securitas rei pub(licae)*.[45] In short, between 361 and 363 yet another debate regarding imperial ideals of masculinity was taking place, but this time involving also the ideal image of the philosopher.

Julian's divine issue

The contours of that debate are well-known. Julian understood himself as a philosopher as well as a military leader, *philosophos kai stratêgos*, and he made these notions well enough known for them to be reflected in ordinary inscriptions.[46] The details of his own concept of the philosophical life, however, remained accessible only to the few, and to us who can read his writings. According to his orations and letters, Julian was advancing notions of a philosophical life that favored a life of retreat over that of greater action.[47] As we know from other sources, especially Eunapius, such predominantly Neoplatonic notions were popular among philosophers at the time and Julian had indeed been initiated into philosophy by one of them, namely Maximus of Ephesus.[48] But, as is also well-known, Julian's concept of imperial identity, the notion of imperial masculinity he wanted to embody, portray and project, also emerged as a result of a deep conflict between himself and his cousin Constantius. However, since both Julian and Constantius, unlike Licinius and Constantine, had originated within the same family, the contrast between the two needed to be even more sharply drawn than that between Licinius and Constantine: it also needed to negotiate the legitimization of imperial rule resulting from a common dynasty. In designating himself a philosopher, Julian had recourse to the only available model of masculinity that permitted the creation of a new family, without at the same time jeopardizing that of one's origin. What counted for Julian was the possibility of enhancing (and thereby overshadowing) the direct link of dynastic succession with the divine parentage of the true philosopher.[49]

Indeed, divine parentage was a familiar claim within the Neoplatonic circles to which Julian had become attracted. Platonist philosophers considered themselves a "holy race" (*hiera genea*), brought forth through holy marriages and hence closely aligned by nature with the divine, which in

[40] Smith 1997, 187, esp. n. 99 to 101, and 200-201.

[41] Smith 1997, 187.

[42] Smith 1999, 182-185.

[43] Szidat 1997: "Die Usurpation Iulians. Ein Sonderfall?", in: Paschoud & Szidat (eds.), *Usurpationen in der Spätantike*, 63-70.

[44] Kent 1981: *Roman Imperial Coinage* VIII, 200-201, for example types from Arles between 355 and 360; effigies from 361 onward are always bearded. Smith 1999, 184 with bibliography for bearded philosophers.

[45] Kent 1981, 529-532.

[46] Arce 1984: *Estudios sobre el Emperador Fl. Cl. Juliano: fuentes literarias, epigrafía, numismdtica*, 110 and 156-158, 161.

[47] For details see Smith 1995: *Julian's Gods: Religion and Philosophy in the Thought and Action of Julian the Apostate*, 23-113.

[48] Goulet 1981: "Les vies de philosophes dans l'antiquité tardive et leur portée mystérique", in: Bovon & van Esbroeck (eds.), *Les Actes apocryphes des apôtres*, 161-208; Fowden 1982: "The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society", *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 102, 33-59.

[49] Jul. *Ep. ad Ath.* 282b-d; Lib. *Or.* 12.58-61; 18.90-102; Amm. Marc. 20.4.1-3; Zos. 13.10.11-16. The bibliography on the subject is extensive. See for example, in addition to Smith 1995, Drinkwater 1983: "The 'Pagan Underground', Constantius II's 'Secret Service', and the Survival, and the Usurpation of Julian the Apostate", in: Deroux (ed.), *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* III, 348-387, esp. 370-383; Matthews 1989: *The Roman Empire of Ammianus*, 93-103, 115-129; MacCormack 1981: *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, 45-50, 192-196; Szidat 1997, 68-70.

turn permitted them greater likelihood of being "divinely possessed with longing for the true goal of philosophy", and of having their eyes opened to visions and divine signs occluded to others.[50] Indeed, such personal relationship to the divine was considered crucial in order to achieve the desired purity, and it is not surprising therefore that such close ties also led to close-knit family relations, which Garth Fowden some twenty years ago described as "incestuousness": many married women, who were close relatives of other philosophers, clearly possessed links themselves to "divine powers", such as the theurgist Sosipatra.[51] For Julian, however, the situation was much more poignant. Philosophically inspired divine parentage represented a legitimate way to deny dynastic principles and to justify his own profound innovation: a new family which gave him legitimacy to revert everything that his own personal family had stood for.

Julian first made this move public in 361, shortly after he had been acclaimed as Augustus and while Constantius was still alive. In his *Letter to the Athenians*, "so that it may become known to you and through you to the rest of the Greeks" (270b), Julian declared his cousin Constantius a criminal who had murdered most of his own and Julian's family.[52] In the same letter, he also pointed out why he alone had been saved. "The gods by means of philosophy" (272a) had spared his life, nurtured him throughout his youth, kept him "pure and untouched", and had granted him spectacular military victories in Gaul.

However, as Julian proclaimed shortly afterwards, now as legitimate ruler, the gods had done much more. In an oration in which he chastised the mistaken notions of true philosophy propounded by the Cynic Heraclius, expressed in the context of philosophical debates initiated by Julian at his Constantinopolitan court in the spring of 362, the emperor further

[50] Quote Hierocles ap. Phot. *Bibl.* 251.461a, 32-34: οὗτος γὰρ πρῶτος ἐνθουσιάσας πρὸς τὸ τῆς φιλοσοφίας ἀληθινόν; cf. the similar description in Jul. *Or.* 11.136b-c; Fowden 1982, 34-40; Goulet 1981, 167-172; Smith 1990: "Late Roman Philosopher Portraits from Aphrodisias", *Journal of Roman Studies* 80, 127-155, esp. 142-146.

[51] Eun. *Vit. Soph.* 466; or the epitaph for Magnilla from Apollonia in Mysia, cf. Vérilhac 1985: "L'image de la femme dans les épigrammes funéraires grecques", in: Vérilhac (ed.), *La femme dans le monde méditerranéen* I*: Antiquité*, 85-112, at 89, n. 8; Fowden 1982, 55; Vatsend 2000: *Die Rede Julians auf die Kaiserin Eusebia*, 31.

[52] See Jul. *Ep.* 8c (26 Bidez) to Maximus, written Nov. 361 from Naissus, according to which his entire army was now sacrificing to the gods. For the date of the *Letter to the Athenians* see Zos. 3.10.3 (Sirmium); Amm. Marc. 22.2.1; 21.12.22-25; Lib. *Or.* 12.64; 14.29; Matthews 1989, 105-106; Bowersock 1978: *Julian the Apostate*, 60.

elaborated on the role of philosophy and that of the gods in his own life (*Or.* 7, 227c-234c). For our purpose one aspect is especially significant. In this account, Julian explicitly declared himself to be chosen by the gods. Specifically, in the context of explaining the meaning of a true myth, he elaborated that he was the son of Helios, who was himself the son of Zeus: "'Thou seest yonder thine own child'... . 'This child,' said Zeus, 'is thine own offspring'" (229c).[53] Zeus and through him Helios, in concert with Athena, had chosen Julian to restore the "ancestral temples which their father before them had despised and stripped of the votive offerings that had been dedicated by many worshippers, but not least by his [i.e. Constantius'] own ancestors" (228c-d, 229c-d). The gods had made this known to Julian through "a slumber or trance". Once awakened, Julian "went away into the desert", where he debated how he could escape the evils embodied by his relatives, a task that left him close to despair, especially when combined with the sheer enormity of his new responsibility. But in these dire straights, Hermes, the god of eloquence, "who had an affinity for him", came to his rescue (230b-d).

In other words, Julian's true parents were the gods, Zeus, his son Helios, and Athena, aided by Hermes. They were his true ancestors, charging him with the restoration of their cults, which Julian's "cursed" mortal family had so willfully rejected, "demolishing the temples and erecting 'sepulchres' (lit. memorials, *mnêmata*) both on new sites and on the old sites of the temples", deeds, which were fitting premonitions of their own untimely demise through murder (228c). Julian's claim to embody and represent the "true philosopher" found, not surprisingly, a parallel in his concepts of family and *eugeneia*: he, too, was of divine lineage, chosen by the gods as a son to safeguard their realm through philosophy. Both his divine lineage and his divinely inspired rule were expressed externally through his portraiture of himself as emperor and military ruler with a philosopher's beard.

Gregory's philosophical family

Given their common intellectual heritage and its option of a "philosophical" family as a guarantor of a divinely inspired philosophy, it is not surprising that Gregory chose a path that was not so very different from that of the emperor he hated so profoundly. There is no need to claim a direct

[53] τουτί τὸ παιδίον, ἔφη ... τοῦτο, ἔφη, σόν ἐστιν ἔκγονον, 229c.

link, of course, but Gregory was familiar with the writings of Porphyry and Iamblichus and hence fully aware of the opportunities Neoplatonist concepts of a "holy race" could offer him in his own task of creating the true Christian philosopher. Gregory, as is well-known, favored the Platonic philosophical life privileging retreat, yet, he needed to innovate, since his "true philosophy" was one inspired by the Christian God rather than one which relied on the gods of the Greeks and the Romans.[54] Given that, what did a true Christian philosopher look like and how did he act? What were the markers of his divine inspiration; how could one recognize the divinity of his parentage? As he made clear, the ideal Christian Greek philosopher was first and foremost embodied by Gregory himself.[55] But, as is evident from the shared assumptions of Neoplatonist philosophy, such a man also needed an appropriately sacred "genesis". And since a philosopher's divine inspiration was prefigured in his origins, it was made manifest not only in himself, but also, of course, in his entire family. Thus, Gregory used the very first opportunity, namely the death of his brother Caesarius in 368 and shortly thereafter, in 370, that of his sister Gorgonia, to write his own family as a perfect philosophical one, now, however, based on the philosophy inspired by the Christian logos.[56]

As has frequently been pointed out, both orations, Oration 7 for Caesarius and Oration 8 for Gorgonia, were conceived as *epitaphioi logoi* and were thus based on the well-known literary models of the encomium as detailed by Menander Rhetor, including an introduction, discussion of the native land, noble birth, education, marriage, deeds, good fortune, comparisons, consolation and epilogue.[57] Yet, they represent nonetheless literary innovations, since they epitomize their central characters as models of

[54] Gautier 2002: *La retraite et le sacerdote chez Grégoire de Nazianze*, 29-112; McGuckin 2001, 57-62.

[55] Gr. Naz. *Or.* 2.53-56 and 69-70; Elm 2000: "The Diagnostic Gaze: Gregory of Nazianzus' Theory of Orthodox Priesthood in his Oration 6 'De pace' and 2 'Apologia de Fuga sua'", in: Elm, Rebillard & Romano, *Orthodoxie, christianisme, histoire/ Orthodoxy, Christianity, History*, 83-100.

[56] Text in Calvet-Sebasti 1995: *Discours 6-12*, at 42-43 and 54, 60 for the dates, and see 39-40.

[57] The oration for Caesarius became a veritable must-read, whereas that for Gorgonia was and still is much less well-known, Calvet-Sebasti 1995, 41-42, 53-54; Menander Rhetor, ed. Russell 1981, 170-178; Pernot 1993: *La rhéthorique de l'éloge*, 33-53, 108-109, 134-178; McGuckin 2001, 4-7, 156-168; Van Dam 2003, 60-65, 93-98. Cf. further Tomas Hägg in the present volume, ch. 7.

the perfect Christian marriage, the perfect Christian as public official, and the perfect Christian wife and mother.

As mentioned above, the encomium honoring Gorgonia especially was new – it is the earliest hagiographic text in praise of a Christian woman.[58] Encomia or indeed epitaphioi logoi for family members were common, but they were rare in the case of women, especially women who were not members of the imperial family, even though Menander Rhetor permitted husbands to compose monodies, or laments, for deceased wives.[59] However, we possess many literary examples in praise of women, while numerous funeral inscriptions record the virtues a woman ought to embody, as well as their ideal exemplar, namely Penelope as wife, mother and guardian of the household.[60] Hence, Gregory's oration for Gorgonia did not require a significant alteration of the encomiastic blue-print: a woman's characteristic virtues were *sôphrosunê, kosmiotês* or modesty, respect for others and a comportment that inspired respect in others,[61] mildness, beauty, philanthropy, and especially the virtue of being a good wife and mother of children.

Similar virtues also form the back-bone of another encomium for a woman, written some thirteen years prior to the oration in praise of Gorgonia, and frequently cited in its context, namely Julian's *Speech of Thanks* for his cousin's wife Eusebia. The fact that so few encomia for women have survived suggests an obvious comparison between these two texts, but the differences are significant.[62] Julian wanted to praise an empress at a time

[58] Calvet-Sebasti 1995, 38.

[59] Though Menander (2.1-2) only makes recommendations for the praise of an empress in the context of the *basilikos logos* for her husband, funeral orations and panegyrics for women associated with the imperial household form part of several histories, e.g. those by Tacitus, Dio Cassius, Suetonius, see Vatsend 2000, 46-48, with bibliography. As Temporini 1978: *Die Frauen am Hofe Trajans*, 168-169 has shown, each female member of an imperial family received in principle a *laudatio funebris*; we posses parts of the *laudatio Turiae*, the *laudatio Murdiae* and of Hadrian's *laudatio Matidiae*. For private monodies, see Men. Rh. 2.436.24-26; Soffel 1974: *Die Regeln Menanders für die Leichenrede*, 19-40, 54-78.

[60] Vérilhac 1985, 85-112, for the near completeness of Penelope as model, 86, 90-112, and 102-107 for the traditional virtues.

[61] αἰδώς, σεμνότης, εὐταξία, ἀρετή.

[62] For example, Calvet-Sebasti 1995, 61-64. For a detailed discussion of Julian's text, written in 356/357, see Tougher 1998: "In Praise of an Empress: Julian's *Speech of Thanks* to Eusebia", in: Whitby (ed.), *The Propaganda of Power. The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, 105-123, at 109-110 for the date of late 356; and Vatsend 2000, date at 137.

when he was still Constantius' Caesar, whereas Gregory wished to present the deceased Gorgonia as an ideal Christian philosopher who was also wife and mother.[63] If there are parallels between Gregory's oration for Gorgonia and Julian's works, then they are to be found, as I have indicated above, not in the latter's praise of Eusebia, but in the emperor's *Oration against the Cynic Heraclius*: there, too, the speaker was in search of a philosopher's family.

Indeed, the differences between Julian's Eusebia and Gregory's Gorgonia are illuminating. Though both are perfect female exemplars – Eusebia is, of course, compared to Penelope and even likened to the divine *Sôphrosunê* (*Or.* 3.123a), and Gorgonia's *sôphrosunê* supersedes that of all humans, past and present (*Or.* 8.8) – she (in contrast to Julian's Eusebia) is characterized throughout as "philosophizing" (*philosophêsasa*, 8.15, 21). Much like that of Porphyry's Marcella, another woman in pursuit of philosophy, Gorgonia's beauty resides in her rejection of its outward signs (8.3 and 10).[64] Her "philosophical life" of *sôphrosunê* is combined with fasting and vigils to a degree otherwise accessible only to male philosophers – Gorgonia's paradeigma is in fact a man, Job.[65] Indeed (again like Marcella, *Ad Marc.* 33), through philosophy she had overcome all difference between man and woman, and though subordinate to her husband – whose house she carefully tended – she was an "equal slave of God" with him (8.8 and 14). Fundamental to this philosophical life was Gorgonia's *eusebeia* or piety and her *phronêsis* or comprehension, which had "purified" her entire family and especially her husband, and which provided God with many more purified fruits, her children – the topos of *euteknia* (8.8). Her understanding of "divine things" and divine words was incomparable, so that she became an illuminating teacher to those around her, who had already profited from her *philanthrôpia*: her family, her congregation, and even those beyond (8.11). Gorgonia was God's living temple, "her life purification and perfection", and its divine inspiration made manifest through two miraculous healings and the serene, exalted manner of her death – written by Gregory in a manner reminiscent of the death of Plotinus in the version

[63] Though what unites both is Gregory's reference to yet another central character, the author himself.

[64] Porph. *Ad Mar.* 3, 33.

[65] μάλιστα φιλοσόφων ἀνδρῶν ἐστὶν ἀγώνισμα, *Or.* 8.13.12.

[66] Edwards 2000: "Birth, Death and Divinity in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*", in: Hägg & Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, 52-71, esp. 56-66; Calvet-Sebasti 1995, 64-82; Gautier 2002, 318-323; Mossay 1975: "Note sur Grégoire de Nazianze, Oratio VIII, 21-22", *Studia Patristica* 12:1, 113-118; Soffel 1974, 78-89 on the absence of the language of grief in Gregory; Van Dam 2003, 114-120 on gender.

by Porphyry (8.11, 20, 21-22).[66]

Caesarius likewise, as mentioned above, is described as the perfect Christian engaged in public life, who was a "philosopher, even in the *chlanis*", an overcoat of fine wool worn both by men and women, symbolizing a refined life and well understood as the antithesis of the philosopher's coat (7.11).[67] Uncorrupted by public life (7.25), Caesarius, "the friend of the emperor" (Julian, 7.10), was a shining example of *philanthrôpia*, appropriate *parrhêsia*, excellent paideia, and, of course, profound eusebeia. The public life he had chosen was in Gregory's words the "second" philosophical life, "not a small thing" either, since only the select few received the "divine call" to live completely as philosophers (7.9). Caesarius, the ideal Christian public philosophical man had remained unmarried, but not without progeny: he leaves as "heirs" the community he had created through his generosity, his *megalopsuchia* (7.20).[68]

To speak about relatives is always also to speak about oneself and both texts offered Gregory the possibility to speak *pro domo* in the truest sense of the word.[69] Thus, in praising his siblings he spoke for himself, and never more so than when evoking the topos of their eugeneia, which was of course also his own. Their parents, Gregory the Elder and Nonna, were the "new Abraham and Sarah of our time", who had brought forth "numerous nations", while Gregory was their "divine promise", their Isaac, whom they had offered as their gift to God (8.4). Gregory the Elder and Nonna ensured that the "Jerusalem above" was "philosophically speaking" Gorgonia's *patria* and *polis* (8.6); they were the "origin" and root of her perfection and illumination, her piety and *phronêsis* (8.11). The oration for Caesarius offered the same opportunity – proof of a special, divinely inspired eugeneia. Here, Gregory declared the Elder "a second Aaron, or a Moses, who was judged worthy to approach the Divine and to dispense the divine word", a "sweet man, without anger" and "weighty in appearance" – corpulent in other words.[70] Father and mother were equals, an Odysseus and a Penelope, equal in their "rich age" (*Od.* 11.136, 19.368) and their eusebeia,

[67] LSJ s.v. and Calvet-Sebasti 1995, 206 n. 2.

[68] At least in Gregory's idealized version. In fact, Caesarius' legacy was beset with problems and many who had expected to receive the fruits of his charity received very little; in *Or.* 7.20 Gregory used the enumeration of Caesarius' worldly possessions (or lack thereof) to emphasize the "vanity" of this world. For in-depth discussions of *Or.* 7 see Calvet-Sebasti 1995, 37-53; Gautier 2002, 320-323; McGuckin 2001, 26-34, 156-165; Van Dam 2003, 60-65.

[69] Konstan 2000, 161.

[70] πολὺς τὸ φαινόμενον, Gr. Naz. *Or.* 7.3.8.

and in their placing their love for Christ even above their love for their children – a trait that rendered them quite different from ordinary mortals, whose funerary inscriptions certainly emphasized the importance of children, but one through which they imbued their children with extraordinary love for Christ (7.4).

In short, Gregory made use of the occasion of an epitaphios logos honoring his siblings to demonstrate beyond doubt that his own parentage was marked with signs of divine favor and divine inspiration. Gregory lived the true philosophical life due to a "divine call" (7.9), which had already elevated his parents, made manifest by their "equal" measure of eusebeia and knowledge of divine words. That the promulgation of divine words was thus his legitimate duty as son and heir to such parents is also made clear: he is after all Isaac to his parents' Abraham and Sarah. Thus, in writing his own epitaphioi logoi, Gregory writes time and again of his saintly and godly-minded father and of his mother, who conceived him through her prayers – "God brought me to my radiant mother in return for her prayers" – knowing that he was meant as an offering to God.[71] Indeed, the theme of his mother's divine inspiration prior to his birth and throughout his life gains ever greater currency – when he was inside his mother's womb he had been in an ideal place untouched by corporeal realities – so that in his later autobiographical writings she gains pride of place.[72] As such, as the son of such parents, who conceived him through prayers, he, Gregory, is himself a *mixis* of the divine and the human, a "messenger … filled clearly with the *nous* of the Trinity" (*Carm.* 2.1.55.19-20). Through his own divinely inspired eugeneia, he is then able to purify his own children whom he has begotten and nourished, like other philosophers before him, through his

[71] *Carm.* 2.1.92; 2.1.93, 94, 95, 96; see also 2.1.98. For better known passages discussing his parents and Nonna in particular see Gautier 2002, 258-267; McGuckin 2001, 8-26; McGuckin 2001a: "Autobiography as Apologia in St. Gregory Nazianzen", *Studia Patristica* 37.4, 160-177; Van Dam 2003, 87-93.

[72] "And I groan because I have been forsaken by the quickening eye of the great Christ … who honored me even in the womb of my pure mother (ὅς με καὶ ἐν σπλάγχνοισιν ἁγνῆς κύδηνε τεκνούσης), and freed me from the icy see and from sufferings", *Carm.* 2.1.50.25-28);

[73] Plato's so-called erotic dialogues (*Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Theaetetus*, e.g. 210c, 148e, 149d-e) are the locus classicus for philosophical teaching as procreation, and they were well-known to Gregory, of course. Harrison 1995: "The Allegorization of Gender: Plato and Philo on Spiritual Childbearing", in: Wimbush (ed.), *Asceticism*, 520-534; as *pars pro toto* for many discussions of the subject (and its homoerotic components) see DuBois 1988: *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women*, 169-183.

words:[73] but in his case, these are the true words of the Divine Logos, though whom he, his messenger, is able to defend and protect his children at all costs from the attacks of the foul one, and thus to fulfill the true duties of a philosopher as priest:[74]

> to purify the souls both in his life-style and also in his speech,
> raising them up in divinely inspired motions,
> calm and high minded, giving shape only to
> divine and unsullied examples,
> as a mirror, formed within him,
> and to make pure offerings on behalf of his children
> until he might make an offering of them.[75]

Gregory of Nazianzus was a family man.[76] Family and its human ties were for him of profound value: they were the constituent factors of his very self as a philosopher. This was not least because as a philosophical family his parents, siblings and children all played their own distinct role for Gregory as the messenger of the Logos. His eugeneia had predestined his path towards the divine, and his siblings' philosophical lives, each according to their own sphere, manifested the power of their shared eugeneia and hence that of his own predestination. Yet, the very nature of his ties to his own, human family mirrored the ties that bound him, too, to his physical self. This physical self and its transformation through the love of the Logos was the precondition for Gregory's own fecundity: his words, which brought forth and purified his children. Thus, Gregory as mother and father, becomes "a character all the more man in that he is more woman", because from his "tongue the triple light shone forth (*Carm.* 2.1.50.32)".[77]

[74] Abrams Rebillard 2003, 30-37, 40-102; Buell 1999: *Making Christians*, 79-179, on nurturing language in Clement; and Moxnes 1997: "What is Family? Problems in Constructing Early Christian Families", in: Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, 13-41.

[75] *Carm* 2.1.12.751-758.

[76] In this he differs from Gregory of Nyssa and Basil, see e.g. Konstan 2000, 171-177 and Rousseau 1994, 17.

[77] Burrus 2000, 83f., where Burrus discusses Gregory of Nyssa's conception of himself as woman, which resembled that of Gregory of Nazianzus in some interesting ways. It is an interesting point whether or not the fluid or complex masculinity developed here was indeed subversive, in the sense discussed by Butler 1990. Following Butler 1993, I would say not, but that is another paper.

10

Gregory: The rhetorician as poet

John A. McGuckin

Gregory's poetry has been studied so far mainly in terms of literary allusions, for the light it throws on the reception of classical texts, not least Sappho, whom Gregory quotes more than any other Christian writer (another surprising aspect of this extraordinary monk). It has also been scrutinized for its historical and autobiographical evidences, domains where it plays a role so fascinating to the interpreter that it often becomes a major source for the interpretation of important aspects of the period, despite the caveats one needs to register concerning the highly charged apologetic nature of the sources, especially when relating the events after 381. The poetry has, to a lesser extent, been quarried for the epitomes of theological teaching it offers, often paralleling and synopsising the more extensive and complex doctrines offered in the *Orations*. In this regard the *Carmina Arcana*[1] formed an early core of the corpus of Gregory's "Collected Poems", and have attracted most theological attention ever since. More recently the poems have drawn interest in relation to the psychological persona of Gregory. In this regard Szymusiak-Affhoelder, Rapisarda,

[1] The *Aporrêta*. The collection of the eight "Ineffable Poems" so named by the Byzantine commentator Nicetas David, comprising *Carmina* 1.1.1-5 and 1.1.7-9. Recently edited and translated by Moreschini & Sykes 1997: St. Gregory of Nazianzus: *The Poemata Arcana*, the *Arcana* provide a condensed course in Christian *theologia* and *oikonomia* (the central dogmas of Trinity, Christology, Creation, Providence, the Nature of Angels, the Human Soul, and Salvation History, the last three being related in Gregory's theological scheme by being the pattern of how human souls are posthumously metamorphosized into angelic status by means of the deification process worked by Christ's incarnation and ascetical teachings). This makes the whole scheme of the *Aporrêta* the story (a Christian counterpart to the *Mythoi* of the Greek poets) of how human life was formed from God ("a breath of the most High" as he calls it) and is destined to return to God. It would be interesting to know if Nicetas only invented the term *Aporrêta*, having found the collection of poems already abstracted into a compendium before his time (from Gregory's first edition perhaps?).

Pellegrino, Cox Miller, Gilbert, and even McGuckin,[2] have quarried the lines with varying degrees of psycho-subtlety (though here we all have the finesse of the amateur analyst).[3] Rapisarda's efforts have had the widest reception in establishing the belief that Gregory's persona as a fussy neurotic degenerated, in his old age, into a whining depressive; a theme recently reprised by Gilbert who wonders if Gregory suffered from "clinical depression", and takes him (rather literalistically) at face value in suggesting his poetic corpus was composed as an analgesic for times of physical and mental pain.[4] It is noticeable how few have analyzed the poetry in terms of its own matrices and intellectual contexts, that is the rhetorical and literary expectations of Second Sophistic rhetoric. Commentators who have proven so capable of subtle critique in regard to so many other aspects of ancient sophistry, suddenly seem to be rendered naïve in the face of a so-called "personal" poetry. Here, in the face of such intimacy of style, is one to suspend disbelief and accept the narration of the form of the psyche at face value? One would do so at one's peril, for the poems are no less rhetorically crafted than the letters and discourses, in fact much more so, as the wide variety of metre and literary device in them would argue; and the artifice here does not so much reveal the persona of Gregory more directly, as serve to cover it with yet more texture. The desire of commentators, latent or not so latent in many cases, to read the poetry as a direct revelation of the inner life, is not necessarily illegitimate, but it needs to be subjected to a much more rigorous analysis than has hitherto been visible in much of the literature; and what is particularly lacking is some generic context for the work of poetry. The desire to substitute our own intellectual contexts for the autobiographical poetry, mainly what I would see as "Late Romantic" in character and quality, simply will not do.

Where to start then? A good place would be back in the school room; but it has to be Gregory's concept of school room, not ours. The issue of poetry had a vast prehistory in Greek letters. Gregory is more than well

[2] Szymusiak-Affhoelder 1971: "Psychologie et histoire dans le rêve initial de Grégoire le Théologien", *Philologus* 115, 302-310; Rapisarda 1951: "Il pessimismo di Gregorio Nazianzeno", *Miscellanea di Studi di Letteratura Cristiana Antica* 3, 136-161.; Pellegrino 1932: *La Poesia di S. Gregorio Nazianzeno*; Miller 1997: *Dreams in Late Antiquity*; Gilbert 2001: *On God and Man: The Theological Poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus*.

[3] More recently Suzanne Abrams Rebillard has defended her doctoral dissertation at Brown University (2003), entitled: "Speaking for Salvation: Gregory of Nazianzus as Poet and Priest in his Autobiographical Poems".

[4] Gilbert 2001, 2-3.

aware of it, and is issuing his own corpus, I suggest, with the specific intent of establishing his name as the first major Christian poet; not merely a versifier, but a poet in the full sense of what that meant in Greek culture. If the collection and publication of his Orations, is designed (as I am sure it was) to be Gregory's claim for fame as pre-eminent Christian Orator and Philosopher of his day, then the contemporaneous issuing of his poetic corpus was surely designed to claim the laurel as supreme Christian Poet as well. The extraordinary juxtaposition of these high claims, and achievements, has been sidelined for modern European critics largely because we have lost the Byzantine context of the reception of his works as the pre-eminent Christian thinker and stylist of the Church (which would have lent initial credibility to his claim given its success in the history of Greek letters), and because we have substituted several false, or at least untested, hypotheses to account for his poetic works; mainly that he was imitating Apollinarist apologists with his didactic pieces,[5] or simply passing time in his geriatric depression by mediocre versifying.

Let us see what new horizons we can sketch in by supplying a more convincing matrix of interpretation. Here I have two suggestions. First we consider what was Gregory's own most likely intellectual environment. Then we consider what were his own stated purposes of the poetry. Our task here is illumined by several reflective statements on this theme in his poems, not least what I take to be the prelude, or proem, to his own first edition of the Collected Poems, the poem "On matters of measure" (or "On metrical issues" – the pun is intended by Gregory), which has been hitherto rather woodenly translated as *In suos versus*: "On his own poetry".[6]

To begin with the first, we must note that the function of poetry had been much discussed in the literary tradition before Gregory, especially resulting in a perceived tension on the subject between the received wisdom of Plato and that of Aristotle. Plato (himself a poet as much as a philosopher), as is well known, banned the poets from his ideal republic. The poets were not to be allowed to be part of the paideia of his future guardians. What is less often cited, of course, is that Plato demands that the poets be first anointed with myrrh and crowned with garlands to honour their inspiration before they are sent on their way. Doubtless they

[5] A thesis that would account for less than one percent of the extant corpus on my reckoning.

[6] *Carm.* 2.1.39, *PG* 37.1329-1336. Even more oddly translated as "To his own verses" by White 1996: *Gregory of Nazianzus: Autobiographical Poems*.

ran straight to the next polis. His point here in the *Republic*, that fundamentally political tract, is that poets have no *political* utility. To function well, the polis must ensure that its guardian leaders will not be swayed by the kind of thing poets generally inculcate. Plato sees the poets as having special power to sway the lower aspects of human life, the emotional and sensual reactions, which in turn dull the noetic and ascensive insights. It is not the stuff he wishes his guardians to read in their formation.[7] Later in the *Republic*, Plato extends his disapproval of what poets do, to the more generic effect they have on the listeners, that is the general citizens, and again it amounts to the moral impact poetry has over the hearer. By undermining a rational cosmology (and replacing it with mythic and fanciful accounts of existence) the poets fail in their duty. Also, by being unable to escape the basic task of material mimesis they tie in human minds to the comprehension of reality as a hylic phenomenon, thus compounding the basic philosophical mistake of taking this mundane reality for true reality. Plato's concern over the paideia of his guardians, and the care of the people's morals, extends also to the theological domain. In relation to the theological agenda, he argues, its inherent principle of mimesis is exactly what distances poetry from theology. The poets who describe gods and heroes in changeable aspects, deceive their public and, as he says, are "like a portrait painter who cannot catch the likeness".[8] Mimesis is so fundamental a part of the poetic task (to represent reality by the vividness of the word-picture) that for Plato this crucial flaw in the poetic agenda shows the need for the radical separation between poetry and philosophy. His own approach to mimesis is more than this issue of representation, however, for Plato also worries that by reciting the words of other characters (mimesis in the sense of trans-personal representation) the formation of the young will be disrupted, in the sense that they will be supplied another's persona before their own is fully established. The context here is the public recitation of poetic works that formed the substrate of almost all Greek paideia, and the poetic presupposition that the reader should graphically adopt the role of the *dramatis persona*, be it a heroic or an evil character which the poem represented.[9] Plato does have some good to say about poetry. In the *Republic* he allows a continuing role for the lyric poet (not the dramatic) if he will restrict his songs to the praises of the gods and the commendation

[7] Cf. *Republic*, Book 3.

[8] *Republic* 2.377-383.

[9] Cf. *Republic* 3.394-398.

of virtue. He repeats the same idea in the *Laws*, where he allows that a poet has some value in educating the citizens if he tries to make a mimesis of *to kalon* such that not only the poetic text is admirable in its quality of mimesis, but even the objects of its consideration are also good and true. There is also one passage which can even be read as Plato's invitation to his readers to prove him wrong about poetry.[10] He invites speakers to come and present a more favourable view if they can, since, as he says: "We shall gain much advantage if we do find poetry to be a source of profit as well as of pleasure". For Gregory the poetic task as a didactic theological and philosophical one is so central to his agenda that we have to register his dialogue with Plato as being significant for him. This is all the more so, given Aristotle's disparagement of the value of didactic verse.

The inspiration which poetry claimed for itself in the Greek world, is categorized by Plato as a type of *mania* which is unacceptable to the philosopher, and incapable of providing insight into the true noetic realms.[11] The "allegorical" rescuing of this poetic inspiration which some critics elevate, Plato rejects out of hand.[12] He is much concerned to argue that poetry cannot claim authority, as was traditionally done in ancient literature,[13] chiefly on the basis of its being "divinely inspired". The Platonic critique of poetry is specifically aimed here at a view of divine inspiration that holds it to be ecstatic and hyper-rational, and against which he wishes to argue for its being more "sub-rational" and as such bad theology, since the noetic is the form of true reality.[14] This theological discussion of poetic inspiration had already been closely noted by Origen of Alexandria who, in his own theory of biblical inspiration, had made extensive notes on the manner of reconciling aspects of Plato's and Aristotle's principles of literary criticism, as I have recently argued elsewhere.[15] Plato thought that the

[10] *Republic* 607.

[11] Cf. Atkins 1961: *Literary Criticism in Antiquity: A Sketch of Its Development* I, 38-70. Cf. *Apology* 22c; *Phaedrus* 244; *Ion* 534.

[12] *Republic* passim; *Protagoras* 347e; *Phaedrus* 229.

[13] Especially visible in the *initia* of Hesiod and Homer, who both appeal to the god or the Muse to inspire their works. In the later Greek era the divine *afflatus* of Apollo was equally significant to the poet who thus appeared, technically, as the mantic prophet. Gregory's interest in appearing as the *mantis Christou* ought not to be underestimated.

[14] Cf. *Phaedrus* 265a.

[15] McGuckin 2003: "Origen as Literary Critic in the Alexandrian Tradition", in: Perrone (ed.), *Origeniana Octava* I, 121-137.

old principle of poetic inspiration as *mania* could partially be rescued, even rehabilitated, by claiming special merit for the refined intuitive insight of the philosopher, that is the acuity to be expected of one who had seen through the veil of matter. In this regard, Aristotle particularly criticized him, wishing to reject the idea of inspired composition completely, in favour of a more objectively controlled analysis of the *telos* of things. Throughout his *Poetics* Aristotle argued that if the poem could consider the *telos* of its subject, it could rise to genuine beauty without having to have recourse to dubious principles of "inspiration". Both aspects, the claim for refined intuition, and also the systematic investigation of the *skopos* and *telos* of human life, are regularly witnessed in Gregory's poems, where he thus presents himself, and his religion, as a reconciliation of the two traditions. This quarrel between poetry and philosophy is implicitly resolved, of course, when the poet is himself the philosopher; an insight Origen did not fail to appreciate from his reading of Plato and Aristotle, and an element which is very central to Gregory too, who shows himself here to be a considered Origenian. Indeed it is one of several aspects of the Alexandrian teacher which Gregory systematized and appropriated for later orthodoxy[16] – elevating the principle that years of disciplined study and mental training of the scholar are the necessary purification required for an "inspired" and accurate interpreter. The agentive role of the priest-philosopher-poet is critical in Origen's interpretative system, and implied of course throughout the latter's self-promotion as inspired Didaskalos-theologian.[17] The selfsame structure of thought is apparent in Gregory, but this time more explicitly presented in the poetic form itself, something that Origen never did personally, since he was so absorbed in the foundational task of being a commentator on inspired literature. Gregory, on the other hand, wishes not merely to comment on inspired literature but, more to the point, to produce it. This motif throws an incidental light also on Gregory's own style of biblical interpretation, which frequently reads scriptural incidents through the lens of his own familial and autobiographical history. We shall return to this shortly; it can suffice for the moment to note that Origen

[16] Gregory sets it as a fundamental principle in the prologue to *Or.* 27 and in *Or.* 28, the *First and Second Theological Orations.* Cf. McGuckin 2001: *St Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, 277-289. For a finely detailed analysis of the *Theological Orations*, see Norris 1991: *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning.*

[17] Cf. McGuckin 1985: "Origen's Doctrine of the Priesthood", *Clergy Review* 70:8, 277-286 and 70:9, 318-325.

had already sketched out the argument in advance of Gregory, and it was, after all, Origen's most explicit reflections on literary analysis which Gregory abstracted in his edition of the *Philokalia*. Gregory's treatment of the question of *skopos* and *telos* is the area where he most resembles Aristotle, as we shall see. But in his defence of the preeminence of moral and didactic poetry, he most closely follows Plato. In short he intends to offer a "golden mean" between the two protagonists, demonstrating the reconciliation of the quarrel between philosophy and poetry in his own poetic corpus, and implicitly presenting Christian paideia as the long awaited fulfilment, the *telos*, of a paideia that consummates all the aspirations of the best of the philosophers. It is not accidental to this enterprise that he himself thus emerges as the consummate pedagogue, nor that the transection point between the two occurs in Gregory's concept of inspiration.

Aristotle's *Poetics* has often been interpreted as a major revision of Plato's argument on the defective nature of poetry as philosophical medium. His treatment of literary analysis is at once more focused and more extensive than that offered by Plato in the course of several works he had designed on other themes. Aristotle gives a more considered programme of literary analysis and typology, but on several occasions he does explicitly make an answer to Plato without naming him. The *Poetics* however, is not a systematic treatise but in the genre of his acroamatic works, advanced discussions for a select audience.[18] His awareness of Plato is particularly apparent with his advancement of a contrary theory of mimesis. For Plato the only point of poetry was if it was good as a textual mimesis of material reality, and also inculcated a moral mimesis of something that was good and beautiful in itself. Its merit was thus to be assessed purely on its accuracy as mimesis, and not on the pleasure it afforded. Aristotle argued the corrective thesis that authentic mimesis in poetry was the exact source of the pleasure it contained. Moreover the mimesis of things that were ugly could rise, in the case of poetic exemplars, to true beauty. In reply to Plato's anxiety that poetry excited only the emotions and disrupted moral formation, Aristotle argued that by stimulating the emotions, poetry released and thus controlled them. His concept of the cathartic nature of poetry as developed in chapter six of the *Poetics*, is thus given a high moral significance. Pity and anxious fear are especially to be expressed in poetic form, and thereby reduced to the correct "mean" in which the orator will be able to control them. In this context "reversals" and "recognitions" are listed as

[18] Cf. Atkins 1961:I, 76.

the chief means whereby the tragic writer can advance this end.[19] The agenda is prominent in all of Gregory's works. Whereas Plato found that poetry rooted in its materially mimetic function, could at best only offer a mimesis of a mimesis of reality, and was therefore always at a considerable distance from the truth; Aristotle found, to the contrary, that poetry aimed at a universal abstraction of reality from particular events, and was thus far more significant as a textual medium of reality than history, which only aimed at a concretely historical truth distilled from particular (and thus accidental) facts. Poetry was, accordingly, "a more philosophical and more elevated thing than history".[20] With regard to interpretation of poetry, Aristotle set out as a principle that to recognize the truth of a thing was to perceive its essential qualities, and to understand its *telos*. He thus saw poetry as emanating from humanity's innate love of mimesis, and the human race's constant concern with pattern, harmony, and rhythm.[21] The unfolding of the *telos* so reveals the essential quality of a thing that, for Aristotle, the history of literature is of paramount importance for the right understanding of poetic texts. This is why he tries to show the evolution of various forms of Greek poetry: how dramas evolved from earlier forms of lyric or choral poetry; or how tragic and comic drama took their shape from various elements present in Homeric epic. Aristotle had little regard for didactic poetry, taking the opportunity to belittle it.[22] It is the chief area in which Gregory will depart from him, preferring Plato in this instance.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle significantly reprised Plato's attack on the inspired nature of poetry, refining it by marking an important taxonomic distinction between two types of poet, the "balanced" (*euphuês*)[23] and the "inspired" (*manikos*) where the implied hierarchy of values is abundantly obvious to the reader. Origen was deeply indebted to this theory, and clearly saw himself in the role of the poet-commentator-*euphuês*, whose art, commenting on the text, makes one creation give way into another, or rather makes the various levels of divine *poiêsis* in the creation shine out one through another in deepening manifestations of the maker's art. The selfsame goal of seeking "balance" (the "golden mean") is presented so often in Gregory that one runs the risk of taking it merely as a topos. It is

[19] *Poetics*, Ch. 6.

[20] *Poetics* 1451b5-6.

[21] *Poetics* 1448b5, 9, 20. Atkins 1961:I, 77.

[22] *Poetics* 1447a18-20.

[23] The range of meanings is rich: "well-grown, graceful, skilful, and morally refined".

that, of course, but in the context of the poetry, it also refers quite consciously to the issue of "inspiration" as such, and Gregory is not merely making a generic remark about moderation in this regard, but using the very concept of "metre" (measured moderation in style) to make his statement about moderation being the supreme character of the inspired visionary, and his own chief qualification as poet, priest, and philosopher, now emerging as the source of a definitive paideia.

So much for a very brief excursus on some of the larger context available for a Greek understanding of poetry in the time of Gregory. The dialogue between Plato and Aristotle had, of course, also been considerably extended by the Stoic moralists, a school that had been much concerned with poetic interpretative issues from the time of Zeno's *Homeric Problems*, and it was also an issue that greatly interested the Middle Platonic tradition,[24] not least Origen as we have noted.[25]

So far we have been concerned with sketching out general matrices for Gregory, now let us turn to the poetry itself and consider the question of motive as it emerges from his own statements and from the structure of the poetic *corpus* as it remains. The first thing that strikes one is the extent of the poetry. There are 19,000 verses surviving today. Jerome and the *Suda*[26] both say that originally there were more than 30,000 verses. The extent is vast. So too is the range of metric styles and forms which he uses: dactylic hexameters, elegaic couplets, epic dialect, rare Homeric forms, iambic trimeters (for tragic themes), and an abundance of neologistic coinings that give him a dash of innovation alongside his carefully stylized archaisms. He will sometimes use a rapid mixture of metres within the same poem.[27] He ranges from the delicate miniature,[28] to the boldly dramatic

[24] Cf. Lamberton 1986: *Homer the Theologian*.

[25] In the poetic corpus Gregory shows his most overt reliance on Origen's theology, not only by demanding the prior "purification" that years of paideia bring to the soul, but also by a regularly implied context of argument – the way he recurringly defines the *telos* of humanity as its transformation into angelic status (or, in other words, its return to the pre-cosmic status of the "first creation" of angelic beings).

[26] Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 117; *Suidae Lexicon* I.541 Adler.

[27] As in *Carm.* 1.1.12, where he lists the canon of scripture for a schoolroom audience, whom he obviously intends to learn the various forms of Greek metre while they are at the task of memorizing the biblical books.

[28] A charming picture of his old servants, the twins Eupraxios, standing by his desk at Karbala. *Epigram* 3, *PG* 38.83-84.

word picture,[29] to the great epic sweep that carries us along on the force of the wave of his line – making it difficult sometimes to stop and remember that this great new Odysseus sailing the waves once more is merely our little Gregory going to school in Athens. In his epic story of his life in Constantinople, he can break through the drama, to fit in enough space for tragic lamentation, as he bewails the suffering such ingratitude brought to his heart[30] and then, with equal ease, turn a whole section of the poem into New Comedy farce, as he blasts the traitor Maximos[31] or, on another occasion, the venality of the bishops and the particularly inappropriate background of Nektarios.[32] To read it all with the fluency it deserves reveals not a whimpering whiner[33] but a consummate artist, who is often extremely funny, and rarely misses the point. To read it haltingly with our crutches of dictionaries, or in translation into our barbarian tongues, is like presenting Stockhausen to an amateur singing circle used only to Handel's oratorios. What can one make of it? Here, much more than in the face of the *Orations*, one feels small before the magnitude of the task, especially when we are still years away even from a complete critical edition. Modern pseudo-psycho-theory has done little better a job of taxonomy than did Dom. Caillau[34] who was responsible for the bizarre scholastic arrangement of the *corpus* as now represented in the Migne texts: in *PG* 37, two volumes each

[29] His "storm at sea" is one of the best of the many classical attempts at this "word-painting" (*ekphrasis*). *De vita sua*, *Carm.* 2.1.11.124-210, *PG* 37.1038-1044. It was abstracted to represent them all by Trypanis 1971: *The Penguin Book of Greek Verse: From Homer to Seferis*, 358.

[30] *De vita sua*, *Carm.* 2.1.11.823-833, 1896-1904, 1919-1949, *PG* 37.1086, 1162-1165.

[31] *De vita sua*, *Carm.* 2.1.11.907-940, *PG* 37.1091-1094.

[32] *De seipso et de episcopis*, *Carm.* 2.1.12.155-191, *PG* 37.1177-1180.

[33] I make an exception for the genuine poems of lamentation (such as *Carm.* 2.1.31, *PG* 37.1299-1300) which emanate from his last illness, when Gregory appeared exhausted by recurrent sickness, and was indeed "tired of living and afraid of dying" as he complains. To take these impatiently, however, is to be less than open to the sharp reality of geriatric suffering in an age before analgesics. One ought not to confuse these relatively few final poems charting the approach of death, with the larger body of Gregory's "sophistic" pieces lamenting the vanity and fragility of life, which are so well crafted that they are clearly not the products of a sick man, but the expressions of a vital artist. Even when he composed poems in times of sickness, he is just as ready to ask Christ to: "Speak the word once spoken over Lazarus: Rise up, and this dead man himself will live once more." *Carm.* 2.1.50.68-70, 105-106, *PG* 37.1390-1393.

[34] His edition of the poems in 1842 was subsumed by Migne. Within the fourfold divisions Caillau set out each poem in what he thought was its "chronological" order of appearance.

divided into two sections, followed by the massive collection in *PG* 38 of Epigrams and Epitaphs. Carmina Book 1 is "theological poems", with 1, section 1, representing "dogmatic poems", while 1, section 2, represents "moral poems". Carmina Book 2 is "historical poems", with 2, section 1, representing poems "about himself"; while 2, section 2, represents poems "about everybody else". The cartoonist Heath-Robinson[35] could not have come up with a better design. The reality is much more complicated, and the poems still wait for a more careful chronological analysis. Many were indeed written between 380 and 390, but Gregory's task as a poet had begun much earlier. Some large fragments exist from his youth in Athens, written between 348 and 358 when he was given the task of producing standard set pieces such as the "Comparison of Life",[36] the "Storm at Sea",[37] the "New Comedic Farce"[38] or even the "Initiation Ceremonies".[39] Many of these might well have been re-used for his great epic narratives of his life, after 381, but they surely pre-existed in his portfolio from years before. The great poem *Carmen Lugubre*[40] was certainly written while his father was alive,[41] probably shortly after his own consectation as a bishop, and thus around 372. The numerous encomia of the virginal life,[42] I would suggest, also date from shortly after this period, when he was resident as a guest of the society of virgins at the shrine of Thekla in Seleukia from 375-378, and doubtless composed for them,[43] much as Ephrem's *Hymns on Virginity* emanated from his residency as a composer in similar circumstances in

[35] Who specialized in depicting inventors with ridiculously complex machines designed to perform the simplest of tasks.

[36] Many instances of such genres exist in Gregory's works, especially *Carm.* 1.2.8, *PG* 37.649-667; or *Carm.* 1.2.16, *PG* 37.778-781.

[37] *Carm.* 2.1.11.124-210, *PG* 37.1038-1044.

[38] *De seipso et de episcopis*, *Carm.* 2.1.12.155-191, *PG* 37.1177-1180. See also *De vita sua*, *Carm.* 2.1.11.907-940, *PG* 37.1091-1094, which is a very funny satire on the long hair of Maximos the Cynic.

[39] See *Carm.* 2.1.45.191-269, *PG* 37.1367-1372; cf. McGuckin 2001, 62-76. There are also several poems which he seems to have addressed to baptismal candidates, giving them a verse synopsis of the confession of faith, cf. *Carm.* 1.1.3, *PG* 37.408-415.

[40] *Carm.* 2.1.45, *PG* 37.1353f.

[41] Ibid. vv. 216-218.

[42] See e.g. *Carm.*1.2.1, *PG* 37.521-578; *Carm.* 1.2.2, *PG* 37.578-632; *Carm.* 1.2.3, *PG* 37.632-640; *Carm.* 1.2.4, *PG* 37.640-642; *Carm.* 1.2.5, *PG* 37.642-643; *Carm.* 1.2.6, *PG* 37.643-648; *Carm.* 1.2.7, *PG* 37.648-649. Hardly any have been translated into English.

[43] He mentions the night-long vigils where they sang psalmody in *On Virtue*, *Carm.* 1.2.10.915-925, *PG* 37.746-747.

Syria. Gregory gave a performance of his *Debate Between Marriage and Virginity*[44] at a meeting when Jerome was present, for it made a great impression on the latter who refers to it in his *De viris illustribus*.[45] This was probably at the gathering of bishops in Constantinople for the council of 381, but the poem clearly existed well before that.

It is impossible here to treat the opera comprehensively, but let us make a start with the *Epitaphia*, much beloved by those who wish to ridicule Gregory as a bad poet, or pin him down as a geriatric depressive much shaken by familial deaths. No less than thirty-six epitaphs for his mother remain extant,[46] and there are numerous others for his family and friends, often several for the same person. Some of these are of the quality one might expect from studying graveyard verse, in his day or ours, although some rise to memorable beauty, not least his epitaph for Basil.[47] Does this labour on epitaphs really demonstrate a pathological level of *memento mori* as some have suggested? Such is our matrix of interpretation, not his. The production of epitaphs is clearly explained by Gregory when he is writing on another theme and makes the "World" come forward to speak in debate with Virginity. In his remarks he demonstrates, accidentally I think, exactly what his own motives were, for here the "World" protests that his is a "good family" *(eugenês)* and that is enough to give meaning to life. Virginity answers back that such nobility is simply a question of having "well inscribed tombs" and in some cases newly inscribed ones.[48] The composition of tombal verses marks the appearance of Christian nobility in Cappadocia, and on other occasions, when he is not criticizing the effort, Gregory is very much concerned to record the swath of that new Christian *gens* that appeared within his own generation. It is this, for example, that explains his much repeated epitaphial efforts for his mother, the one significant family member for whom he did not produce a funeral oration. Gregory's collection of graveyard verses for every occasion is a compendium for Christian families on the rise; a crash course in genealogical good breeding. That was why it was preserved (for use) and why it was regarded by the Byzantines as meriting favourable comparison with the best of the Greek Anthology.[49] So much for a Gregory obsessed with thoughts of dying.

If we turn to the poem "On matters of measure" we find more illumination with regard to his poetic project. If the retirement to Arianzum was a busy time of editing and preparing his corpus of *Orations*, which took shape as a complete "Compendium of Lectures" suitable for bishops on every occasion (and were used as such in the centuries following), we can suppose it was no less busy for the amount of poetic works he issued at this time. The *De vita sua* and several of the other long epic poems about his life were assembled and despatched to Constantinople with considerable urgency as part of a fiercely continuing battle over his reputation after the events of 381, when the issue of the Council, Nektarios' preferment, and the continuing saga of Maximos the Cynic were dominating his horizons. Eulalios, Nicobulos, and others of his inner circle were actively assisting him. The issuing of his poem "On matters of measure" seems to me to be a preludium designed to stand at the head of an edition of Collected Poems. I see no way now of determining which poems these were,[50] but from his prelude I deduce it was a carefully selected volume, and that it comprised a collation of theological teachings,[51] together with other sophistic-didactic pieces, satires and encomia, meant to demonstrate, in a way parallel to his collation of the Orations, his mastery of the varied genres of Greek Letters. He soon would complete the trilogy by entrusting the edition of his "Collected Letters" to Nicobulos.

The poem "On matters of measure"[52] begins, as is appropriate, with a survey of the whole field of contemporary writing. Throughout this work, in iambic trimeter, the dynamic of the word-play on metre, measured

[44] *Carm.* 1.2.1.

[45] *De viris illustribus* 117.

[46] *Epitaph.* 66-102, *PG* 38.44-63.

[47] "I had thought a body could sooner live devoid of soul, as I live on deprived of you, my Basil, beloved, servant of Christ. And yet you have gone and I remain", *Epitaph.* 119, *PG* 38.72.

[48] *Carm.* 1.2.8.41-45, *PG* 37.652. "But I come from a noble family! Well, what clan are you from? Who made you? Can it be that you do not know you are merely clay, and that the only possible 'good birth' is a mimesis of God? You are good at building tombs for yourselves and have newly fashioned inscriptions for them, where you are styled 'high born', but you did not live as such."

[49] The Gregorian epigrams were translated by Paton 1917: *The Greek Anthology*, Vol. II (LCL).

[50] Gregory's heirs seem to have issued the "Complete Poetic Writings" – not a friendly thing to do for any poet. It is comparable to the very large edition of the *Complete Poems* of Thomas Merton. His reputation as poet was not advanced by the indiscriminate (chronological) arrangement and juxtaposition of every note, collation of images, and significant poetry, he composed. The poet's best friend is the waste basket, or posthumously, an editor who is not afraid to use it.

[51] The first edition of the *Aporrêta*, perhaps?

[52] *Carm.* 2.1.39, *PG* 37.1329-1336.

statement, and measure as judgement, provides a satirical pulse. Gregory starts by surveying all and then gives a "measured" judgement: Most who have written before him in this generation suffer from logorrhoea.[53] They produce too much and the arrogant vacuity of their minds is all too evident. Gregory has one word of advice for them: they ought to consign their words to the waste bin[54] So much for his contemporaries. That disposes of the need for citations and footnotes in one swift and elegant move. This is of course a stunning and hilarious start, and specifically targetted at the same time, if the reference to the "tonnage of sand"[55] and "swarms of Egyptian gnats" is, for the cognoscenti, also a dig at Maximos the Cynic, with regard to whom Gregory feigns astonishment elsewhere for his audacity in not having laid down and died for shame.[56] Now that all words have been dropped, Gregory says, we can have the clarity of seeing only those words which are "divinely inspired".[57] These will be words that welcome us in a quiet harbour after the storm; the words the Spirit advocates for a defence against the chattering of enemies that seek to harm us.[58] His point here rises beyond local *apologia*, to turn on the issue of "inspiration", the poet's claim to represent the *afflatus* of the divinity. Knowing his texts, he makes his reader (now a generic representative of Hellenic letters) admit that contemporary writers cannot offer truth since "they can only bring up arguments that belong to this lower world".[59] This is, of course, in exact agreement with Plato's argument against mimesis. But if Gregory "seemed" to refer to the scriptures when he offered "divinely inspired words" to those who would follow him in shedding contemporary literature, he explains more clearly in verses 22-24. It is "his" verses he means. These are the divinely inspired words. It is one of those great leaps he sometimes makes in all innocence, leaving the listener wondering whether he or she heard correctly. He presents himself as the resolution of the old schism between the philosopher and the mantic poet. The same Spirit who inspired the sacred scriptures is that Spirit who gives vision to Gregory's eyes, and allows

[53] Their words flow out in a rush (*reontas eukolôs*) of useless matter (*lêrêmata*), *Carm.* 2.1.39.1-6, *PG* 37.1329.

[54] *Carm.* 2.1.39.9, *PG* 37.1330.

[55] *Carm.* 2.1.39.7, *PG* 37.1330.

[56] *Carm.* 2.1.41, *PG* 37.1339-1344.

[57] *Carm.* 2.1.39.10, *PG* 37.1330 (*tôn theopneustôn*).

[58] *Carm.* 2.1.39.12-15, *PG* 37.1330.

[59] *Carm.* 2.1.39.16-21, *PG* 37.1330-1331.

him to speak of things which he has seen not from material archetypes, but heavenly ones.[60] His words will recount his own labours (*ponêmata*), a term which he subsequently uses to compare his poetic analysis of life with the scriptural text considered as the (literary) labours of the Divine Spirit.[61] It is the magnitude of the claim, so quietly presented, that induces Gregory to spend the remainder of the poem justifying his motives for writing verses, and to ensure that his critics do not judge him on ordinary material standards (as if he were a pagan poet devoid of real inspiration) and think that he is seeking glory (*doxa*) or popularity (*anthropareiskein*).[62] There follows a catalogue of reasons in two parts why Gregory writes poetry,[63] covering such ground that it is clear that he refers to far more than the present occasion. The list is interwoven chiastically with a diatribe against a literary critic and apologist[64] (a real rather than an imaginary one, for the opponent has issued an *Invective* in "mutilated iambic verse" against him)[65] who seems to be envisaged as a Christian[66] and may thus be Maximos the Cynic again. The first, and longer, section of the diatribe (vv. 68-81) is an extended joke on how his critic does not like his metres since he himself is so "unmeasured" (metrically incapable as well as having transgressed proper bounds in his invective). But Gregory is not worried by such critiques. Let him who can measure up to Gregory serve as his judge. A blind man cannot act as valid critic in the world of the seeing, no more than a limping person can run with the swift of foot.[67] Such a critic is no more than a pretentious monkey aping a lion. No prizes for guessing who the lion is.[68]

[60] This is why his accounts of the vision of the heavenly women (*Carm.* 2.1.45) is important to him, as too his constantly repeated theme in the poems of the "angelic transmutation" of the soul when it lays aside its "mixture" with corporeality and ascends to the heavenly world – a process that begins here below with the ascetical taming of the flesh (see e.g. *On Virtue*, *Carm.* 1.2.9, *PG* 37.667).

[61] *Carm.* 2.1.39.31, *PG* 37.1331 (*tôn theiôn ponôn*).

[62] *Carm.* 2.1.39.25-30, *PG* 37.1331.

[63] *Carm.* 2.1.39.34-67, 90-99, *PG* 37.1331-1334, 1336.

[64] *Carm.* 2.1.39.68-81, 100-103, *PG* 37.1334-1336.

[65] *Carm.* 2.1.39.70, *PG* 37.1334.

[66] When Gregory stops castigating him as a bad poet, he adduces scriptural evidence to justify his procedures in versifying. *Carm.* 2.1.39.82-89, *PG* 37.1335.

[67] *Carm.* 2.1.39.71-72, *PG* 37.1334.

[68] In case you miss it he makes it absolutely clear in verse 53, *PG* 37.1333.

When he resumes the diatribe,[69] it serves as his conclusion to the poem as a whole. It also serves, in this capacity, as an apologetic summation.

In this, it is fulfilling the standard function of all *prooemia* to classical-era editions of a writer's collected verses. Instead of what we would regard as the prelude's primary function of synopsizing and introducing the contents, the ancients regarded the proem as the ideal place to settle scores, and it is in such apologetic contexts that autobiographical notes about ancient writers usually appear. This is one of the chief reasons that I suspect that this particular poem (with its summatic character, its generic setting out of principles, and its robust element of apologetic attack) to have originated as the original proem to the collation of verses which Gregory himself was first releasing in Constantinople in the immediate aftermath of his resignation as Archbishop. The collection, he says, comprises new things of his own as well as reworked classical items, and it has encomia and diatribes in it, as well as dogmatic material, speculative thought, and some of his orations synopsized and set in verse for memorization.[70] This conclusion makes a general reprise of the attack on potential detractors which he made at the very beginning of the poem: they are the literary critics and proponents of letters he dismissed as new fangled logorrhoeans in the opening verses:

> Why then do you blame me for my careful metres,
> Judging another by your own metrical standards?
> How disparate are the lands of Mysia and Phrygia.[71]
> How disparate the flights of crows and eagles.[72]

Gregory, of course, is the Eagle from Phrygia. But it is his critics who are the provincials when it comes to literary matters, even though it is obvious that it is the literary world of the capital that he finally has in mind here. Though he presents himself as a careful smith of verse, an exact fashioner of lines who thus forms a contrast, in classical old style, with contemporary writers who are careless and loose, it is nevertheless no old-fashioned conservative from the sticks who addresses them (an argument that was raised against him several times during his stay in Constantinople), because his

[69] *Carm.* 2.1.39.100-103, *PG* 37.1336.

[70] *Carm.* 2.1.39.64-67, *PG* 37.1334.

[71] Mysia was Thrace (meaning Constantinople). Phrygia stood for Asia Minor, standing in for Gregory's homeland of Cappadocia (by extension from Galatia).

[72] *Carm.* 2.1.39.100-107, *PG* 37.1336.

verse is a dramatic new form of "inspired literature". Once more, and this time truly, the poet can claim the divine *afflatus*, and speak philosophical paideia to his readers. It is no less than the announcement of a new program of Christian paideia, and Gregory is the first to propose it in this form. His labours thus stand alongside the "labours" of the Spirit which culminated in the scripture, and in presenting himself as the inspired poet of the Spirit (whose glory he had championed in the capital) Gregory implicitly claims the "continuance" of the age of revelation, much as he had argued formally for the idea in his *Fifth Theological Oration*, when he compared the present age to the time of the third seismic shaking of the world, when the full potentiality of divine Spirit was finally revealed to the cosmos.

When one considers the list of motives Gregory then gives for his verses, we can see emerging a sketched out program of Christian paideia. There are five reasons offered in part one of the catalogue,[73] and he later makes a reprise of the second of them in his final image of paideia through verse being like an architect's scaffold for an arch, to which he returns after he has completed his first section of diatribe.[74] The five reasons are as follows: First to serve as an ascetical exercise for Gregory. Straining to observe the metre is a difficult task that limits his writing. He implies here a marked contrast to those who wrote "without measure", and that unlike theirs his words bear a force of noetic penetration that marks them out as philosophically acute. The first reason is both personal, the asceticism fitting to a Christian sophist, and also generic in that it sets the tone by implying the resolution of the quarrel between poetry and philosophy in this new paideia. Second, he says, he wants to gather "the young" (*tois neois*) around him, that is fresh minds ready for something new, "as well as those who find great joy in literature, as if in some delightful medicine".[75] At the very least, his verses may provide a good substitute for other kinds of musical songs that are popular with the young, but they may also have a deeper effect on young minds by being an inducement to "more useful

[73] *Carm.* 2.1.39.34-67, *PG* 37.1331-1334.

[74] *Carm.* 2.1.39.90-97, *PG* 37.1336. The verses are a pleasant way of leading the young to "communion with God", and when their souls have been stabilized in this communion, Gregory says, then the time will be right to knock away the wooden scaffold of simple joys, for the arch will by then have the stability of stone.

[75] *Carm.* 2.1.39.37-39, *PG* 37.1332.

things".[76] His poetry will be an enjoyment that has "nothing in it that could hinder progress towards the good" (*to kalon*). The second reason not only announces a progressive program of paideia, it specifically announces the Christian idea of ascent to the Good as an answer to Plato's problem with poetry as a corrupting moral force. In a sense, therefore, Gregory is claiming to offer a solution to the problem of educating the new guardians of the polis that does not follow Plato's puritanism in exiling the poets. The Christians have come into their own with an all-encompassing vision of paideia that will shore up their self-evident ascent to the guardianship of the state under the Christian emperors. Immediately Gregory's mind turns to his third motive for poetry:[77] to demonstrate the way in which the old world, the world of hellenism, has been bypassed. Gregory is determined not to let it be said that the pagans have more beautiful words or greater literary talent "than us" Christians. The ascent to beauty as approached by hellenistic paideia, was a matter of "ornate words" (*kechrôsmenois logois*); for Gregory and the Christians it is to be a beauty apprehended in contemplation (*theoria*) which will mark them as "the truly wise at play in words".[78] His fourth reason is personal: that in his recent illness (he mentions it to reinforce the reason he gave for his resignation from the throne of the capital city, in order to offset the reasons his enemies gave) he has comforted himself (as Aristotle said the wise man ought to do) with poetry that will bring back the measure of the mean in a sophist's life. This last gift to the capital will not be the lamentation of a dying swan, but rather Gregory's swansong of farewell. He intends to go out, with this edition, in unforgettable style. His fifth and final reason is an invitation to the wise to enter into Gregory's innermost mind. The way he expresses this[79] is a clear evocation of Plato's representation of Socrates' paideia as the fulfilment of Delphic piety, as represented in the axiom: *Gnôthi seauton.* Gregory's scrutiny of his soul in his verses is the pathway to knowledge of the inner self, the image of God within the illumined Christian, which will be the path to divine comprehension. It is no accident that in Gregory we find the first ever Christian autobiography, the principle for which (long before Augustine) being the desire to scrutinize the inner soul as the revelatory icon of God.

[76] *Carm.* 2.1.39.40-44, *PG* 37.1332.

[77] *Carm.* 2.1.39.47-53, *PG* 37.1332-1333.

[78] *Carm.* 2.1.39.50-52, *PG* 37.1333.

[79] *Carm.* 2.1.39.58-59, *PG* 37.1333 (πρὸς ταῦτα νῦν γινώσκεθ' ἡμῖν οἱ σοφοὶ τῶν ἔνδον).

In conclusion, in considering the poetic corpus of Gregory, we find the same complexities of Greek sophistic context, personal and professional apologetic riposte, and intellectual acuity which characterize his Orations. The apparently "intimate" nature of the psychological horizons covered in the so-called "ascetical poems" (Caillau's *Moralia*) ought not to blind us moderns, suffering the withdrawal stages of Late Romanticism, to the fact that these were Aristotelian exercises in establishing the golden mean of sophistic detachment, by cathartically purging excess through poetic *skepsis.* In relation to his overall poetic agenda we find the dialogue between Plato and Aristotle, the so-called Quarrel between philosophy and poetry, to have been particularly illuminating for Gregory's work, not least the manner in which it stimulates him to posit a thoroughly new system of Christian paideia, which he represents as a perceived solution, a resolution to the old *impasse.* In this regard his own implicit claim to be the supreme *kêryx,* the herald, of the divine Spirit of God, is used as the basis for claiming the revitalization of the principle of "inspiration" (divine *afflatus*), which both Aristotle and Plato had undermined in relation to the classical poetic tradition. In addition to this, the feverish activity of the last decade of his life, when he was preparing final editions of his works and shaping up the "Collected Editions" (of Orations, Letters and Poems) for the benefit of the literary audience in Constantinople, seems to have marked a time, most notably in his poetic corpus, when he reflected on the nature of Christian paideia and when he determined to set out a coherent textual basis for the theological *theoria* he had already systematically sketched out across so many substantive Orations. This is why, perhaps, he began his poetic collation by synopsizing the central theological message once more in consummately graceful poetry – the *Aporrêta* or *Carmina Arcana* – which I suspect, though it is impossible to prove, was an edition that predated Nicetas David who first named them as such.[80] The shape of the "Collected Edition" of the poetry has now been obscured by two facts: the unwillingness of his posthumous editors to lose anything of his poetic jottings (indeed it was a Byzantine schoolroom exercise to add pieces in the style of Gregory, which is why there are many *spuria*), and then Caillau's bizarre arrangement of the poetry canonized in the Migne edition. Gregory's concern, in his last decade, to issue a substantive collection of his poetry, probably made him begin with the *Arcana* and then go on to

[80] His commentary on Gregory's poems can be found in *PG* 38.681-842.

include examples of all other genres, epic, elegaic, cathartic, and comedic. The generic explanation of his poetic motives as found in the poem "On matters of measure" supports this thesis; and I take the latter to be his own draft for the proem to such a Collected Edition. One key motive of this last literary work was certainly to restore his own reputation in the capital, his sense of honour that had been damaged after the debacles surrounding the Council of Constantinople in 381; but there is clearly another, more deeply embedded, set of motives in all of this, which is his attempt to sketch out the principles of the new form of Christian paideia that he envisaged. In the edition of his "Complete Orations, Letters, and Poetry" Gregory, on behalf of the Christians collectively, claims the high ground for a new curriculum, a new vision of culture and the paideia that had to go with it. Although Julian had outraged him in his claim that only Hellene worshippers could honestly appropriate the inner spirit of hellenic literature [81], since it was rooted in the service of the gods, the idea nevertheless seems to have registered in Gregory's consciousness for the obvious truth it contained, at least in the manner in which he then appropriated it from his reading of Plato and Aristotle. Years later he is ready to present the substrate of a whole curriculum based on his trilogy of orations, letters, and poems. If this seems to us a monumental claim, it is one that has to be contextualized in the light of Byzantium's long history of a revision of hellenic paideia which followed more or less exactly Gregory's prescripts, and enthroned him as a poet-rhetor, not to the exclusion of the old writers (which it had never been his intention to suggest) but alongside them, and in many cases above them. Despite his many protestations, he did have his eye on a throne after all. In his writing the word covers that of the bishop, but especially that of the city rhetor. Gregory, as the source of true dogma, and the root of new paideia, managed to achieve both.

[81] "How did it ever come into your mind, most idiotic and 'unmeasured' man, to seek to deprive Christians of their words (*logoi*)?" *Or.* 4.102, *PG* 35.363; cf. McGuckin 2001, 119-126.

11

Among the hellenists: Gregory and the sophists

Neil McLynn

Although critics have unanimously recognized in Gregory Nazianzen a deep and enduring commitment to a Christianized version of classical hellenism, they have been more successful in evoking a philosophical background, or in accumulating philological foreground detail, than in explaining what this commitment might in practice have involved.[1] The problem is, in large part, inherent in the material. Whereas Gregory's biographers possess, in the correspondence and the autobiographical poetry, a self-presentational agenda with which they can argue, and students of his theological project likewise have a model of the Theologian systematically "polished up" for them in a succession of orations from different stages of his career, his only explicit construction of the hellenist, in his first invective against Julian, is merely a punning riposte to the Apostate's version of the same, which thus reveals much more about what Gregory's hellenism is not, than about what it is.[2] Gregory's own attitude to classical literature must therefore be inferred from a few isolated (and mutually contradictory) statements, and also from the many quotations and allusions embedded in his works: even scholars alert to the tensions implicit in this evidence have been reluctant to discuss the contemporary resonance of Gregory's exhibitions of pagan learning.[3] Some recent studies have mean-

[1] Representative surveys are Fleury 1930: *Hellénisme et christianisme: Grégoire de Nazianze et son temps* and Ruether 1969: *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher.*

[2] For the forces driving Gregory's response to Julian, see Elm 2001: "Orthodoxy and the True Philosophical Life: Julian and Gregory of Nazianzus", in: Wiles & Yarnold (eds.), *Studia Patristica* 37, 178-193; Van Dam 2002: *Kingdom of Snow*, 192-202.

[3] Demoen 1993: "The Attitude Towards Greek Poetry in the Verse of Gregory Nazianzen", in: den Boeft & Hilhorst (eds.), *Early Christian Poetry*, 235-252, concludes that Gregory "felt forced to engage in a sort of continual give-and-take" (252); in his invaluable study, Demoen 1996: *Pagan and Biblical Exempla in Gregory Nazianzen*, Demoen reserves his most searching analysis for the Biblical motifs, briefly classifying the classical material as serving "more as ornamentation", "for literary embellishment" →

while seemed to sanitize Gregory's hellenism unduly, by absorbing it into a comprehensive (and uncontroversial) Christian philosophy;[4] others to risk reducing it to a hobby.[5] To assess what might have been at stake for Gregory in pursuing his literary interests it is necessary to establish a social setting. The purpose of this paper is therefore to explore in more concrete detail the context of Gregory's engagement, at Nazianzus, with classical culture and with its locally recognized purveyors. Some connections will be established, and some others proposed; but many more questions will be raised than answered. Not the least challenge for students of Gregory is to give due recognition to all that remains uncertain about his career and his literary purposes.

Gregory and the literary professionals

The small, dusty town of Sasima, twenty-five kilometres south-east of Nazianzus, which Gregory famously dismissed as "an utterly abominable and cramped little village" (*De vita sua* 442), features also (its only other appearance in classical literature) in a letter from Basil of Caesarea. Replying to a certain Callisthenes, who had announced that certain miscreant slaves who have sought asylum with the bishop were to be removed to the place where they had displayed their "disorderliness", Basil proposes a compromise whereby they be taken only as far as Sasima, adding that by doing this much Callisthenes would assert his authority sufficiently, and instill fear in them and "their masters"; he should therefore (instead, presumably, of inflicting the flogging that they deserved) then send them away from Sasima unharmed (*Ep.* 73).[6] For all the characteristically brisk authority of Basil's tone, the information that a "soldier" was at hand, waiting to drag the slaves away, suggests that he wrote from a position of

(325). For a recent analysis of classical quotations in the correspondence, see McLynn 2000: "Word Games in Late Antique Cappadocia", in Nishimura & Takahashi (eds.), *Vocabulary and Style in Classical Antiquity*, 35-58.

[4] Gautier 2002: *La retraite et le sacerdoce chez Grégoire de Nazianze*, esp. 169-175, 258-267.

[5] Van Dam 2002, 200, has Gregory "free to go on enjoying classical culture" after Julian's death; cf. Van Dam 2003: *Families and Friends*, 146: "The essence of Gregory's friendship with Philagrius and other boyhood chums was their mutual delight in classical literature".

[6] For a recent analysis, see Pouchet 1992: *Basil le Grand et son univers d'amis*, 294-295.

relative weakness. We might infer, although much remains unclear, that there had been a clash of entourages on the road somewhere near Sasima – a modest provincial version, perhaps, of the brawl that Cicero tried to explain away in *Pro Milone*.[7] And the relevance of the episode to our inquiry is that the rebel slaves belonged not to a populist politician but a professor of literature. For Basil wrote a further letter, to a third party whom he hoped might help soothe what he acknowledged was a just grievance against their master (*Ep.* 72), and here he identifies this man as "the most eloquent" Eustochius – and this can be none other than the rhetorician of Caesarea who figures also in Gregory's correspondence, where it emerges that Eustochius had learnt his craft, like Gregory and Basil, in Athens – and indeed had done so as a classmate of Gregory himself.[8]

Some years later, the bishop of another small, dusty town, seventy-five kilometres north-west of Nazianzus, lamented to a celebrated rhetorician who happened to own a property nearby (and in much the same terms as Gregory had used to complain about Sasima) that his "city" was not a city – or at least, he added, it would remain a desert unless his correspondent agreed to become its extempore "founder" by putting in an appearance there; moreover, his own standing among the populace would be enhanced if he could show himself off in the rhetorician's company. The bishop here is Basil's brother Gregory, and the town Nyssa (Greg. Nyss. *Ep.* 9);[9] and the rhetorician is one Stagirius, whose demand for roof-timbers for his villa the same Gregory would also field, in a nice example of the exchange of concrete favours that underpinned the cultural negotiations between Christian bishops and classical professors (*Ep.* 26-27). But Stagirius is not merely a convenient illustration of the enduring power of hellenism in Christian Cappadocia; he also features, like Basil's Eustochius, in the correspondence of Gregory Nazianzen, where it emerges that he too was a rhetorician at Caesarea, and like Gregory and Eustochius was "Attic in his training" (*Ep.* 188.1).

Gregory's attested dealings with Stagirius and Eustochius revolve

[7] This would explain the significance of Sasima: as spectators to Callisthenes' discomfiture at the hands of the slaves, the staff at the *mansio* were appropriate witnesses of his vindication.

[8] For Gregory's Eustochius, see Hauser-Meury 1960: *Prosopographie zu den Schriften Gregors von Nazianz*, 78-79. Basil uses this title of address elsewhere only for a select group of lay Christians at Neocaesarea (*Ep.* 210: for the context, see Pouchet 1992, 480-482) – whom he reminds of their previous offer to him of a teaching post in the city.

[9] Maraval 1990: Grégoire de Nysse, *Lettres*, 180 n.1.

around the education of his great-nephew Nicoboulus, whom he first consigns to the former (*Ep.* 188) and then demands for the latter (*Ep.* 192). And while it is striking to find, in Gregory's Cappadocia, two Athens-trained rhetoricians operating in direct competition with one another, still more striking is the impression given by Gregory's correspondence, that he encountered these two Athenians only in the closing years of his life, and solely by accident. For Gregory would insist to Eustochius that he had introduced Nicoboulus to Stagirius solely at the express request of the boy's father and of Nicoboulus himself (*Ep.* 190.3). All but one of the seven letters addressed to the two relate directly to this initial introduction and its fallout;[10] the one exception seems to belong later.[11] The surviving corpus of letters thus implies that Gregory had lived quite separately from any provincial network of "Old Athenians", until his family obligations pushed him into this awkward collision. And in modern studies of Gregory's hellenism he is duly kept at a safe distance from the world of professional letters and its posturing professors.[12]

However, on closer inspection the correspondence (our only source) in fact points rather in the opposite direction. Or rather, Stagirius was the stranger: Gregory's emphasis in his initial letter on the background they shared – an education at Athens, and a pastoral responsibility (*Ep.* 188.1) – implies strongly that he could find no more specific common ground. The letter was thus an initial overture, offering rather than consolidating a friendship. Stagirius had a villa at Osiena, a stage on the road from Nyssa to Caesarea (and actually closer to Nazianzus than to either of those cities)[13] but seems to have been a much younger man, and had perhaps only recently established himself at Caesarea.[14] For in his letter Gregory offers Nicoboulus as his down payment with which to open an account. Old

[10] Although *Ep.* 165-166 to Stagirius do not mention the incident, their teasing references to the rhetor's unfounded sense of grievance are best explained in the context of Nicoboulus' transfer.

[11] The "prize of silence" which Gregory claims for himself at *Ep.* 189.3 suggests that he was no longer bishop; he was still in office when he sent Nicoboulus to Caesarea (see below, n. 75).

[12] Ruether 1968, 53, even locates the Nicoboulus episode to Athens, and classifies Gregory's intervention among the "peaceful and elevating pursuits" of his retirement.

[13] Osiena: Greg. Nyss. *Ep.* 26.2. Hild and Restle 1981: *Kappadokien*, 250-251.

[14] At *Ep.* 192.2 Gregory will offer "paternal" advice. The supposition that Stagirius and Gregory might have been schoolfriends in Gallay 1967: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Lettres* II:78 n. 2 is unwarranted.

athletes like himself, he says, are honoured by young ones (like Stagirius) – inasmuch as when these veterans present them, the young competitors, with the prizes for their victory, they (the old) also earn recognition (*Ep.* 188.4). The conceit is convoluted, but the prize being offered to Stagirius here can only be Nicoboulus; and the victory can only be that which he has just won over the other sophists who would be bidding for the boy. Pupils like Nicoboulus would be the object of intense competition, not only for the fees they would bring but also for the judgement that was implied when parents chose to place their students – a point especially crucial for younger sophists still trying to establish themselves in a competitive marketplace. Gregory could be confident that Stagirius would consider his "friendship" a valuable commodity.

Gregory's relationship to Eustochius was entirely different. In the opening letter of the exchange, he leaps Homerically *in medias res* (*Ep.* 190.1) in a manner that recalls his banter with Basil.[15] Moreover, he acknowledges a moral obligation to the rhetor. Even as he tries to laugh off the accusation of "Stagirism", he betrays his seriousness by the elaborate defence that he mounts. What is more, the claim that Eustochius had upon Gregory's protégé proved strong enough to compel him, despite his blustering, to backtrack: we next find Gregory writing to Stagirius to demand that he hand Nicoboulus over to his rival (*Ep.* 192).[16]

Although Stagirius and Eustochius appear in the collection on an equal footing, with four letters to three, this appearance is misleading. Not only had Eustochius been Gregory's fellow-student at Athens, but it is also clear, both from the tone of Gregory's letters and Eustochius' evident ability to invoke the duties of friendship, that the two men had not lost sight of one another during the quarter-century that followed.[17] Despite the obvious danger of building arguments from non-existent texts, we might usefully ask how many letters had passed from Gregory to Eustochius, commending the sons of the Nazianzene gentry to the rhetor's care. Ancient friendships were sustained by acts of mutual favour, and Gregory could hardly have avoided these. His circumstances thus made him a conduit:

[15] Gregory employs similarly Homeric opening gambits in *Ep.* 5.1, 46.1, both to Basil; in both cases, however, he feels obliged to explain the reference.

[16] Van Dam 2003, 220 n. 15 takes Gregory to ask merely that Stagirius "share" Nicoboulus; but the letter seems clearly to ask that he resign his claim.

[17] Van Dam 2003, 145, sees a continuous friendship, which after thirty years "still revolved around classical culture", but without exploring the implications.

parents who knew that he had studied with Eustochius would naturally consult him before consigning their sons to the latter's school. And indeed the one letter to Eustochius that is *not* connected with the Nicoboulus affair suggests a fairly complex level of engagement. Gregory here calls on Eustochius to "redouble" his efforts in teaching a certain Pronoius, with a gentle reminder that his own praises of the sophist's performances were not insignificant (*Ep.* 189). This seems to presuppose some previous correspondence between churchman and rhetor concerning the boy (who presumably delivered the letter), indicating a deliberate concern on Gregory's part to remain involved. He thus seems to have invested a considerable amount in this relationship, and to have exerted himself to conduct it on his own terms.

The letter collection itself can be seen as an aspect of the involvement – and perhaps, indeed, as a direct consequence of this contretemps with Eustochius and Stagirius. Discussions of this anthology have often taken their cue from Gregory's own image of himself as an aged Nestor (*Ep.* 52.1), and he is conventionally envisaged rummaging nostalgically through his archives and gathering whatever flowers (notably the souvenirs of his friendship with Basil) happened to catch his attention.[18] But Homer's Nestor buckled on his armour to return to a deadly serious business: and the same applies, it can be argued, to Gregory, who emerges remarkably well from the exchanges with Basil that have been preserved.[19] Equal care, it might be suggested, went into the selection of letters that show Gregory inadvertently stirring up his hornets' nest in Caesarea, for the compilation of the collection is directly connected with the schooling of the contested pupil Nicoboulus. At least, Gregory went to work at the latter's express request, Nicoboulus having asked him for something *dexion eis logous*: "handy for literary studies".[20] And although as with so much of Gregory's work it is impossible to supply an exact date, far the likeliest context for

[18] Van Dam 2003, 178, envisages Gregory "feeling nostalgic and forgiving" towards Basil while editing his letters.

[19] McLynn, 2001: "Gregory Nazianzen's Basil: The Literary Construction of a Christian Friendship", in: Wiles & Yarnold (eds.), *Studia Patristica* 37, 178-193, at 187-189.

[20] McGuckin 2001a: *St Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, 395, credits the editorial work to Nicoboulus; but *Ep.* 51.2 seems to show Gregory presenting his nephew with a complete book rather than raw materials. The complexity of the manuscript tradition (Gallay 1953: *La tradition manuscrite des Lettres de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*) suggests that the collection underwent several early reorganizations, as different users sorted an already complete body of letters according to different principles.

such a request was while Nicoboulus was a student, receiving his training in *logoi*.[21] The letters selected for inclusion, moreover, allow Gregory to emerge strikingly well from this particular debacle. He takes pains to place himself above the sophists' battle. We see him first teasing Eustochius for his resentment at losing Nicoboulus, then teasing Stagirius for *his*; nor even when surrendering Nicoboulus to Eustochius does he seem to concede an inch. His last words on the matter are impressively final: praying that the rhetor might learn to control his tongue, he announces that he shall henceforth take care of what is his (*Ep.* 191.3).

Other letters to local sophists confirm this impression of a continuing, but carefully controlled, engagement in the literary world.[22] But perhaps the most remarkable letter in the whole collection – and also the second shortest, at just sixteen words – shows Gregory taking on the most celebrated rhetorician of his age. In a note to Libanius of Antioch he speaks as a (natural) "mother" dispatching her sons to their (cultural) "father"; Gregory's maternal solicitude is causally linked to Libanius' paternal care (*Ep.* 236). Psychological explanations have been given for this act of female impersonation; but it smacks more of an extremely clever (and slightly presumptuous) conceit, which allowed Gregory to avoid the deference that would be required in a formal plea to the great man.[23] Gregory's self-consciousness in addressing himself to Libanius seems very different from the letters sent to the Antiochene rhetor by Gregory of Nyssa, or his old student Basil.[24] His note shows him attempting with Libanius what he had achieved through his correspondence with the rhetors of Caesarea: to create a place for himself within a patronage system without acknowledging himself to be part of it.

[21] Cribiore 2001: *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 215-219, has a brief but useful discussion of the role of epistolography in formal education; cf. Liebeschuetz 1972: *Antioch*, 17-23, on the educational function of Libanius' collected letters.

[22] See below, p. 232 (Ablabius and Adamantius); p. 237 (Eudoxius).

[23] McGuckin 2001a, 6 n. 23, cites the letter as evidence for the significance of the Anima in Gregory's psychology. For the artistry of Gregory's "feminine" voice, see Susanna Elm's chapter (9) in this volume.

[24] Greg. Nyss. *Ep.* 13-14. For Basil's correspondence with Libanius, and the vexed question of its authenticity, see Pouchet 1992, 151-175; Rousseau 1994: *Basil of Caesarea*, 57-60.

Gregory the literary professional

If Gregory could claim that his judgements on a professional rhetor like Eustochius mattered, this was because he had once been one himself. However, this professional career remains one of the most elusive phases of his life. Apart from several allusions to a time when he had given speeches, the direct evidence consists of one letter to a student's father, Evagrius (*Ep.* 3), and a couple of throwaway lines in his autobiography recording how he had "shown off *logoi*" on his return from Athens (*De vita sua* 265), and "danced for friends" (274). These items admit of a very restrictive interpretation: Gregory's most recent biographer has him tutoring one pupil privately "for a short while", and giving one rhetorical exhibition in public.[25] It is worth asking, however, how much room for interpretative manoeuvre remains available, and what sort of career, beyond this minimum, might be compatible with the evidence.

The very fact that Gregory supplies even this little material is somewhat surprising. The otherwise unknown Evagrius is (probably) the only correspondent from before his ordination, except for Basil and his brother Caesarius, to find a place in the letter collection.[26] Moreover, the brief passage in his autobiography that marks this interlude between his departure from Athens and his commitment to activist monasticism seems gratuitous, and indeed triggers an explanation of his motives that eventually requires an awkward resumptive device (*De vita sua* 274). Controversy might be inferred behind this apparent digression: this poem was part of an ongoing dialogue with the Christian elite of Constantinople, and in a previous instalment Gregory had savaged those bishops who had inadequate training.[27] Such outbursts may well have prompted retorts about his own rhetorical past, and the *De vita sua* passage can be understood as an attempt to put this in context.

But in order to evaluate these items of evidence, it is necessary to consider Gregory's circumstances during this shadowy period between his return from Athens and his ordination. He had returned to Nazianzus with

[25] McGuckin 2001a, 86; cf. Gallay 1943: *La vie de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, 65 (one pupil).

[26] *Ep.* 7 to Caesarius probably belongs shortly before his ordination; for *Ep.* 10 to Candidianus, see below, n. 44.

[27] McGuckin 2001b: "Autobiography as Apologia in St. Gregory of Nazianzus", in: Wiles & Yarnold (eds.), *Studia Patristica* 37, 160-177.

his brother Caesarius; but Caesarius only stayed long enough to make arrangements to relocate definitively to Constantinople, with the expectation of acquiring a seat in the senate there. At his brother's funeral a decade later Gregory makes a point of reminding the audience that Caesarius had paid his municipal dues, by offering his hometown the first instalment of his *paideusis* (*Or.* 7.9); but any such token exhibition will only have sharpened the questions which Caesarius' departure will in case have raised – about the family's commitments to their own city. The dog that never seems to bark in studies of Gregory is the city council of Nazianzus, of which Gregory's father had been (or almost certainly had been)[28] a senior member. But the family continued to possess private property that must easily have qualified them for curial membership; and for all the uncertainties about the scope of clerical immunities during this period, it seems certain that sons of bishops were not automatically exempt from curial service;[29] we can be certain too that "servitude" on a council would be for Gregory a fate even worse than becoming a clergyman.[30] Gregory's teaching career should therefore be seen as a response to the danger that resentment (or simply fiscal pressure) might induce the council to co-opt him. There is no reason to suppose that he ever sought (let alone held) the formal exemption that would come with a municipal chair. His uncle Amphilochius, however, seems at this very time to have held such a post at Nazianzus;[31] we might therefore envisage an understanding whereby Gregory would remain free of curial obligations while operating in association with his uncle's school.[32] Such a trade-off would have considerable attractions for the city

[28] Despite the mistaken attribution of Greg. Nyss. *Ep.* 1 to Gregory, the conclusions of Kopecek 1973: "The Social Class of the Cappadocian Fathers", *Church History* 42, 453-466, at 454-456, remain valid.

[29] For a survey of the evidence, see Lizzi Testa 2001: "The Bishop *Vir Venerabilis*: Fiscal Privileges and Status Definition in Late Antiquity", in: Wiles & Yarnold (eds.), *Studia Patristica* 34, 125-144.

[30] *Pace* McGuckin 2001a, 395, Gregory's protest to a provincial governor that his nephew Nicoboulus was threatened with "becoming a slave", *douleuein* (*Ep.* 146.6), should be understood as a reference to curial obligations, which alone makes sense of the threat that his sons might suffer the penalty in his place.

[31] Gregory presents his uncle as both rhetor and advocate (*Anthologia Palatina* 8.132, 135-136): the two roles could be combined. I am not persuaded by Hauser-Meury 1960, 29-30, that Libanius *Ep.* 670 shows Amphilochius holding a post in the imperial bureaucracy by the early 360s.

[32] For an excellent discussion of the evidence for teachers' immunities, emphasizing the flexibility of the system, see Kaster 1988: *Guardians of Language*, 221-226.

fathers of Nazianzus. As Gregory of Nyssa would remark to Stagirius, even a visit from a celebrated rhetor could enhance a town – and whereas Nyssa was a stage on the branch road from Parnassus to Caesarea and ultimately Armenia, Nazianzus lay on the main east-west artery of the empire, a road traversed regularly (and especially in this period, when Constantinople and Antioch served as the twin poles of government) on the one hand by officials and emperors, and on the other by poets and rhetoricians.[33] An up-and-coming rhetorician, properly connected to the wider literary network, might induce the former to stop and hear their praises sung, and the latter to stop and indulge in a bout of competitive collaboration. Such occasions were central to the all-important business of keeping the city abreast of its neighbours.[34]

At Nazianzus Gregory was in a situation very different from Basil at Caesarea, who was free to teach there (or not to), and at the same time to entertain offers from other cities in the region, because the distribution of his family property spared him any binding ties to any particular city, and denied any particular council an exclusive claim upon him.[35] Moreover, Basil's father was dead – and whatever hold the council of Nazianzus had upon Gregory operated through his father, whose property remained in the family's hands. This fact in turn might help to clarify Gregory's frequently-repeated protestations about the duty of care that he owed to his parents. We instinctively translate these into a personality issue, with a frail but domineering father and an over-solicitous (or too easily bullied) son; but it is worth recalling that the only concrete account Gregory ever gives of his duties is his complaint in *De rebus suis* of c. 370 that he had not only to give orders to slaves and administer property, but also to haggle in public over tax returns (*Carm.* 2.1.1.140-158).[36] Filial piety thus translated into a public role. Hence Gregory's emphasis, in his *Apologia* of 362 and again in his

[33] The best survey of the cultural traffic of the period is still Cameron 1965: "Wandering Poets", *Historia* 14, 470-509. For emperors in Cappadocia, see Van Dam 2002, 95-117.

[34] The practical benefits to be expected are apparent from Gregory's later intercessions with two successive tax officials, *peraequatores*, who had both known him in Athens and who would publicly acknowledge themselves susceptible to his eloquence: Van Dam 2002, 88-92.

[35] This stage of Basil's career defies precise reconstruction. See Van Dam 2002, 22-24, and Rousseau 1994, 61-62.

[36] In describing these as the routine tasks of a "landowner", Ruether 1968, 142, forgets that Gregory was not himself the legal owner of the property: in a status-conscious society this made a crucial difference.

autobiography two decades later (*Or.* 2.103; *De vita sua* 321-323), that his "philosophy" had consisted in not *seeming* to be a philosopher.

Moreover, although in later writings Gregory would stress, with increasing emphasis, his parents' helplessness and dependence upon him, his earliest reference to his care-giving responsibilities is much more straightforward: he acknowledges to Basil that he has broken his promise to join him, but trumps the law of friendly promises with another – that enjoining service, *therapeuein*, to parents (*Ep.* 1). Commentators have tended to see Gregory trapped here in an emotional conflict of his own making.[37] But he does not even try to evoke sympathy for his parents' condition, and the connotations of *therapeia* stretch far beyond domestic help;[38] so perhaps their health was not yet the issue, and Gregory was invoking a duty that he could expect Basil to understand. If absconding from Nazianzus would indeed amount to shirking the family's municipal obligations, he would be exposing his parents to serious consequences. Another letter, describing the gossip that spread when his brother remained at Julian's court (*Ep.* 7.4-5), brings home the weight of local opinion.

It might therefore be suggested that Gregory's two directly attested activities following his return from Athens – teaching rhetoric, and acceptance of a responsibility to stay in Nazianzus with his parents – might be interconnected: that Gregory became a teacher *in order* to fulfil his filial duty. Not only does this provide an economical explanation for the known facts, but it also allows a fresh perspective on the one piece of contemporary evidence to survive from his teaching career, the letter to Evagrius. This strikes a distinctly provocative note. Evagrius had presumably not sent his son to Gregory to have the latter provide the rhetorical training he here claims to have given – "none, or perhaps just a little, for the matter of eloquence is of no great importance to me" (*Ep.* 3.2). For all Libanius' constant protestations to be teaching virtue rather than technique, there is nothing remotely similar in his correspondence with his students' parents to Gregory's boast that he had instilled "fear of God and contempt for the circumstances of the moment". On the other hand, Evagrius had already welcomed his son home and congratulated Gregory on his work; as in Gregory's later exchanges with rhetoricians, we might therefore see in his self-

[37] Van Dam 2003, 45, thus interprets the letter in terms of Gregory's dilemma between his devotion to his ailing parents and that to his ascetic ideals.

[38] For this more general sense of the duty of service, see especially *Ep.* 16.7, recommending mutual *therapeia* between Basil and his bishop Eusebius.

presentation a creative adaptation, whereby he was able to operate within a rhetorical milieu without becoming part of it. Once again, moreover, an editorial agenda might be detected in Gregory's selection of this letter, alone, to represent this phase of his career: a quarter-century later, this was how he wished his teaching to be remembered.

We know little about Evagrius' son, and nothing whatever about Gregory's other pupils. However, merely by offering a course of instruction Gregory was impinging on the life of his city, for ancient education did not recognize (and indeed could not have imposed) any clear boundary between the classroom and the adult world beyond.[39] The career of Libanius shows the extent to which parents involved themselves in their children's education;[40] moreover, the public displays that were required of any teacher necessarily involved local opinion – Libanius thus measured his success at Nicomedia by the currency of his prologues, which he claims displaced all other such "songs" from the streets (Lib. *Or.* 1.55). Although his activities at Nazianzus were no doubt on a much smaller scale, the fundamental point applies to Gregory: as a teacher, he was the focus of more than merely his students' interest. Many of those who would later attend his sermons, that is, would previously have heard his declamations; and Gregory's awareness of this was bound to influence his own self-presentation as a preacher.

Moreover, just four lines after introducing the "friends" for whom he danced, in the very next sentence of his autobiography Gregory again (at least in the most likely interpretation of his Greek) mentions "friends", who again are listening to his rhetoric: "There was then need for manly counsels; I establish at home a jury of my friends, genuine encouragers of my reasonings" (*De vita sua* 277-279).[41] It seems reasonable to suppose that

[39] Brown 1992: *Power and Persuasion*, 44-45, emphasizes the physical proximity of Libanius' classroom at Antioch to the council chamber.

[40] Libanius *Or.* 1.37 makes clear the importance of his pupils' parents in helping him first make his name; much useful evidence for parental involvement is collected by Cribiore 2001, 108-114. For the way in which a father's attitudes could complicate his son's relations with his teacher, see Augustine, *Conf.* 6.7.11.

[41] ἔδει δὲ λοιπὸν ἀνδρικῶν βουλευμάτων. / ἔνδον καθίζω τῶν φίλων κριτήριον / ἐμῶν λογισμῶν γνησίων παραινετῶν. It is grammatically just conceivable, although no commentator or translator has to my knowledge so construed these lines, that ἔνδον here might mean literally "inside" (sc. Gregory's head) rather than the more usual "at home" (rather than in public), with φίλων simply as an adjective governed by λογισμῶν "reasonings" (with παραινετῶν, "encouragers", in apposition). For discussion of these lines, see Jungck 1974: Gregor von Nazianz, *De vita sua*, 165.

these two sets of friends were identical, and reflect the appreciative penumbra of literary-minded gentry who spent their leisure listening in at the rhetorical schools. Such men would make an appropriate audience for the famous "brain-storm" which Gregory goes on to describe, his choice between different varieties of the spiritual life. He presents this, indeed, as the sort of deliberative speech that was the staple of the educational diet. Another former rhetorician, in an autobiographical account of his conversion, would famously draw his friends into the agonized deliberations that led him towards his eventual commitment.[42]

This passage in *De vita sua* raises an important question. For here Gregory's "choice of life" seems to represent a dramatic turning point, the moment when he finally grows up and abandons rhetoric for a middle way which would reconcile his obligations to his parents and his yearning for ascetic withdrawal. His readers have followed his lead, and have supposed a decisive commitment.[43] Even if his rhetorical career is allowed to include several years of regular teaching, therefore, this passage seems to establish a definite cleavage between Gregory's hellenist past and his future.

However, we search in vain for evidence to corroborate this impression. Gregory's one explicit reference to an abandonment of rhetorical activity is his claim that only his premature decision to give up *logoi*, and his resolution not to deliver panegyrics or appear in public to do his "philosophizing", prevented him from trumpeting the governor Candidianus' glory (*Ep.* 10.2). But this letter belongs to Julian's reign and almost certainly follows Gregory's ordination, which provided an excuse (which he would certainly have welcomed in this case) for his failure to sing the governor's praises through the conventional media.[44] Offsetting this text, moreover, is another from the same period, the *Apologia* for his flight from ordination. His excuse is he was "thunderstruck", because of the desire that overwhelmed him for the Good of tranquillity (*hêsychia*) and retirement (*anachôrêsis*), for which he already possessed a greater yearning than did any "who had devoted themselves to

[42] Aug. *Conf.* 6.7.11-10.19, for Augustine's discussions with Alypius and Nebridius. Note the exercise in deliberative rhetoric with which the passage closes.

[43] Ruether 1968, 29, associates this "personal moment of decision" with Gregory's baptism; cf. Bernardi 1995: *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, 119-121; Gautier 2002, 282-284.

[44] *Ep.* 10.12-13 indicates that Candidianus was a pagan serving a pagan emperor; since Julian only assumed control of the eastern provinces in December 361, there would be little scope for this exchange before Gregory's ordination, given the need to accommodate his flight to Pontus before his liturgical debut at Easter 362. See Gallay 1964: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Lettres* I, 13 n. 1, 122; Hauser-Meury 1960, 51-52.

logoi" (*Or.* 2.6).[45] Here *logoi* are not childish things which have already been put away: Gregory still counts himself among their devotees, while claiming to have combined with this commitment a passion for ascetic withdrawal. And exactly the same expression for literary devotees recurs in his panegyric on Basil, where he makes explicit the connection with formal rhetorical activity, describing his friend's life as "the greatest theme for the contests of those who have devoted themselves to *logoi*" (*Or.* 43.1).[46] The image that Gregory presents of himself in 362, therefore, is not one of bookish reclusiveness: devotion to *logoi* could only find its proper expression in competitive public performance.

Gregory's most powerful identification with the world of hellenism comes in the closing movement of his first invective against Julian (*Or.* 4.100), where he resumes the theme of *logoi* that had dominated the beginning of the speech. Appealing to all who delight in *logoi* and who are "attached to that regiment", he counts himself among their number. Having forsaken all else – wealth, nobility, glory and power – he clings to *logoi*, refusing to find fault with the great efforts that had provided him these, and praying that their force might remain with him, and with all who would be his friends. Here again Gregory seems to profess a continuing engagement in classical literary activity; and although as a priest he would gradually modify the terms of his self-presentation (in a speech delivered soon after this, he would apply the same phrase, "clinging to *logos*", explicitly to the Word of God: *Or.* 6.5), there was evidently scope for confusion among his local audience. In his funeral speech for Caesarius, delivered more than a decade after his return from Athens, Gregory took issue with those listeners who supposed him pleased to have the opportunity to give an epideictic oration, just as he had "formerly" done (*Or.* 7.1).[47] Although by now he certainly no longer proclaimed himself a devotee of

[45] See Bernardi 1978: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 1-3*, 94, for the lack of the crucial word ἐσπουδακότων in the main branch of the tradition; the reading is nevertheless required for the sense.

[46] The phrase, οἱ περὶ λόγους ἐσπουδακότες, occurs only twice otherwise in contemporary authors: Basil, *Ep.* 24.2, emphasizing his correspondent's commitment to humane values, and Zosimus 4.15.2 (probably quoting Eunapius), describing the victims of Festus' purge in Asia. Lucian had used it of the intended audience for his *True History*, full-time students of literature (*VH* 1.1.5).

[47] Gregory here describes the anticipated performance explicitly as *epideixis* (*Or.* 7.1). The suggestion at McGuckin 2001a, 158, that this was for the benefit of potentially critical monks, is possible but not, I think, necessary.

logoi, he still seems to be living down his former reputation; nor, moreover, does he appeal here to any publicly-known abnegation of display speeches.

In two texts from the time of his ordination, therefore, Gregory was still associating himself with a self-consciously "literary" milieu. The sole evidence that he made a single decisive renunciation of public hellenism is therefore the highly schematic account in the *De vita sua*: and moreover, on closer inspection this does not clearly state that Gregory had already embarked on his middle way when he was overwhelmed by the trauma of ordination.[48] We might therefore take seriously Gregory's own remark at Caesarius' funeral, that while his "yearning" for ascetic "philosophy" had preceded his decision to commit himself and renounce ambition (a decision dated here to coincide with Caesarius' return to Constantinople), the ascetic "life" itself had come "later" (*Or.* 7.9), and consider a more protracted, and less clearly defined, process of disengagement from his rhetor's throne. This would also be compatible with what became Gregory's preferred formulation, that he dedicated his *logoi* to the Logos. For Gregory could claim to have done this already in Athens (if not before); and he was still doing it as a presbyter.[49] Moreover, the Gregory who wrote the letter to Evagrius, his pupil's father, could already claim to have abandoned all that was meretricious in classical education. The profession allowed scope for such a disavowal. A parallel might be the philosopher Chrysanthius of Sardis, another man of curial rank who settled in his own city and lived a life of conspicuous philosophical detachment, but at the same time taught students and gave occasional exhibitions.[50]

Gregory's teaching style, as described in the letter to Evagrius, involved acting out, continually, a preference for pleasing God over grubbing for wealth or seeking empty honours; he was not involved in "selling words", so escaped the contradiction that bedevilled Augustine in Milan, between

[48] Note his use of the present participle at *De vita sua* 337 (οὕτω φρονοῦντι δεινὸς ἐμπίπτει κλόνος): on a literal reading, he would still be engaged in his deliberations when his father intervened.

[49] Gregory traces to early childhood his goal of making "bastard" letters a useful ancillary to genuine ones at *De vita sua* 112-120; at *Or.* 6.5-6 he describes the same project in the present tense; at *Carm.* 2.1.1.99-100 he associates it with his decision to care for his parents. See in general Camelot 1966: "Amour des letters et désir de Dieu chez saint Grégoire de Nazianze", in: *Littérature et Religion*, Supplement to *Mélanges de science religieuse* 22, 22-30; cf. Gautier 2002, 175.

[50] For Eunapius' account of Chrysanthius, see Penella 1990: *Greek Philosophers and Sophists in the Fourth Century A.D.*, 75-78.

teaching and an ascetic commitment.[51] Nor would he necessarily have felt it necessary to give up his teaching even in order to receive baptism, which might help explain our difficulty in locating this episode.[52] So if we allow that Gregory held a publicly recognized rhetorical role in Nazianzus, as the Evagrius letter seems to require, we might therefore envisage this as continuing, in some form, until he was ordained; for only then would he become formally ineligible to give public displays, as he would explain to Candidianus. And the boundaries perhaps remained flexible: the orations against Julian smack more of the rhetor's podium than the preacher's pulpit.

Any such extension of Gregory's professional career would have considerable implications. His ascetic negotiations with Basil, or rather the correspondence that provides our sole basis for reconstructing these, would read very differently if he still held at the time a professional post. His letters concerning Annesi would thus become a teacher's reports on his vacation trip, intended not only for Basil but also for the edification of his own pious, literary-minded disciples at Nazianzus. The issue is even more directly relevant to the character of Gregory's reaction to Julian. However indirect his connection with local schools had been, or become, the longer such a connection had endured, the closer to home Julian's educational reform will have come.

From school to symposium?

The argument, then, is that Gregory was able to rehearse his role as a Christian ascetic while teaching at Nazianzus, and that he did this for a period of several years. Since the success of such a rehearsal would depend on his ability to earn the sympathetic attention of a local audience, we must ask what happened to Gregory's literary-minded friends after his ordination. Again there seems at first to be a clear break, since the key figures in Gregory's subsequent career are the "friends of God", who are usually identified as a band of "local monks who took their lead from Armenia

[51] Augustine has become the standard model of the Christian rhetor, and for the incompatibility of rhetoric with serious Christian commitment. But Augustine, who depended on his salary and fees, was literally a "salesman of words" (*Conf.* 9.5.13; cf. 9.2.2) in a way which Gregory never was.

[52] Gautier 2002, 282, supposes that Gregory renounced his chair "lors de sa préparation au baptême"; McGuckin 2001a, 55, assigns the baptism to his time in Athens. Marius Victorinus is the most notable contemporary example of a baptized Christian rhetorician (Aug. *Conf.* 8.2.3-5).

and Pontus", already established as the most "respected and venerable figures in the local church".[53] However, it can also be argued that even in the mid-360s Nazianzus remained untouched by the ascetic initiatives that we associate with the name of Eustathius of Sebaste.[54] While the scope of this paper does not permit exploration of this question, we must bear in mind the extent to which our view of Gregory's local role at Nazianzus will depend upon our beliefs about what might be called the ascetic hinterland.[55]

The crucial text for the present argument, however, might seem to present a securely unmonastic context. In a celebrated letter to Basil Gregory describes a symposium, a drinking party, where, before the wine had gone round, he was discussing with a gathering of "distinguished friends" their accustomed themes – Basil, philosophy, Athens, and the perfect concord there between the two famous friends – when suddenly a visitor in the plain garb of a monk began a fight over Basil's doctrine of the Holy Spirit (*Ep.* 58.4). Gregory defended Basil but by the end of the discussion found that all his friends had turned against him (*Ep.* 58.12-14). When he had first introduced the subject, moreover, he had spoken in general terms of the "many" critics of his lack of doctrinal fibre as men "who share in doing what we do, doing good in doing so" (*Ep.* 58.2) – which must mean ascetics, but also seems to refer to the same symposiasts whose unanimous support for the visitor's criticisms forms the main point of what follows. That Gregory was still hosting traditional symposia, open houses for those who shared his philosophical ideals, represents a direct continuity with the cultural and intellectual milieu of the local rhetorician; but more importantly, his guests seem to have been his fellow-ascetics.

Moreover, it might be possible to put names to these monastic-symposiastic friends. Basil replied to Gregory's letter, mentioning that it had been delivered, and the scene explained in more detail, by "the most reverend brother Hellenius" (Basil *Ep.* 71.1). While this title is often used of

[53] McGuckin 2001a, 100, 107.

[54] Brown 2002: *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, 36-39, argues for a drastic reevaluation of the role and influence of Eustathius; see also McLynn 1996: "Gregory the Peacemaker: A Study of Oration Six", *Kyoyo-Ronso* 101, 183-216, at 212-213.

[55] McGuckin 2001a has the great virtue of making explicit a logical connection that earlier biographers had tended to elide: Gregory Senior's desire to make his son bishop is thus interpreted as an attempt to wean him "from the ambit of these 'zealot' monks" (190), and Gregory's early episcopal preaching as an appeal to this particular constituency (204-205; cf. 196, 197, 199).

clergymen, Basil refers elsewhere in exactly the same terms to a "most reverend brother Hellenius", this time adding the information that Hellenius was "equalizing the taxes at Nazianzus" (*Ep.* 98.1). A tax-equalizer named Hellenius, moreover, is also addressed by Gregory, in a poem appealing for tax exemptions for certain local monks (*Carm.* 2.2.1): all these references must be to the same man.[56] The Hellenius of Gregory's poem was well qualified both to participate in earnest talk of Basil and Athens, having studied there with them both, and also to deliver Gregory's message, since he was an Armenian, whose route home, after his assessment at Nazianzus was complete, would take him through Caesarea.[57]

The most economical inference would therefore be that the audience assembled at Gregory's party were the very same monks who had received the tax-benefits; and indeed such a party would be an entirely appropriate occasion for Gregory to deliver his poem, which is best envisaged as a virtuoso exhibition.[58] These ascetics are Gregory's own personal circle. They were a mixed bag, but were certainly not directly connected with his father's cathedral, and were probably not all ordained clerics.[59] Gregory's plea to Hellenius is thus entirely different from a superficially similar petition from Basil to the prefect Modestus, requesting that clergy receive special treatment.[60] Gregory was representing a group of prosperous, propertied relatives and neighbours: Cledonius (*Carm.* 2.2.1.121-129) was a retired imperial official; Eulalius (130-138), his own cousin, had had difficulties over a property deal a few years earlier; Nicomedes (143-170), another relative, was a father of two sons, who had now ploughed his capital into

[56] The uncertainty expressed by Hauser-Meury, 1960, 97, over the identity between Basil's two Hellenii is unduly scrupulous; nor is McGuckin 2001a, 218, justified in making the Hellenius of *Ep.* 71 a "priest-monk".

[57] Fellow-students: *Carm.* 2.2.1.285-299; Armenia: *Carm.* 2.2.1.279, 359. Basil *Ep.* 98 explains that Hellenius had brought a message from the Armenian bishops on his outward journey. There is no need to suppose, as McLynn 1998b: "A Self-Made Holy Man", 473 n. 34, that Hellenius commuted between Nazianzus and Caesarea in the course of his assessment: a single return journey, via Caesarea, will explain the evidence.

[58] McGuckin 2001a, 216, suggests a different context for Gregory's symposium. For the character of the poem, see below, p. 236.

[59] Nicomedes was a presbyter, but evidently did not serve the city cathedral. His construction of a church and dedication of his two sons to the clergy, commemorated by Gregory at *Anthologia Palatina* 8.139-140, suggests that he was establishing in his own portion of the city's extensive territory a clerical dynasty to match that of Gregory's father in Nazianzus itself.

[60] The comparison with Basil *Ep.* 104 is made by Hauser-Meury 1960, 97 n. 197.

funding the construction of a church; Rheginus (203) would bequeath a piece of land to Gregory.[61]

There is even a direct link between this constituency and Athens. Gregory mentions a certain Carterius only to note that God had given him "to another" (*Carm.* 2.2.1.139-142). Although Hellenius could not reduce Carterius' taxes, "you will make him yours", says Gregory (139-140), by showing favour to his companions. Hellenius therefore knew Carterius; and the versified epitaphs that Gregory eventually produced for the latter suggest that this acquaintance might be traced back to Athens. For Carterius had "guided Gregory's rudder" when he "put his words to metre abroad" (*Anthologia Palatina* 8.142) – language which suggests that he had been Gregory's pedagogue.[62] If so, he would probably have been (although the dearth of concrete information about pedagogues in the sources makes certainty impossible) a trusted family slave, manumitted either before or after the educational odyssey.[63] While he might conceivably have been enrolled under a different jurisdiction, the most likely reason for his not being on Hellenius' register is old age, which would mean that the compiler of a previous census had already struck him off.

We cannot know how this group of wine-drinking, property-owning ascetics had come together. Any hypothesis, as mentioned earlier, will be conditioned by our view of the monastic forces at work in Nazianzus in the 350s-360s. The deeper the local roots we allow for the ascetic movement, the more diversified the influences operative will become – each of these men could conceivably have been under the influence of a different guru, with Gregory no more than a first among equals, or even an eccentric outsider. However, the attested connections between Gregory and the monks catalogued in the poem make it much more likely that they were his own disciples, who had (as it were) followed him into the hills. In order to persuade friends, relations and neighbours to make significant changes to their lifestyle, it is necessary to generate a certain momentum: and a schoolroom at Nazianzus would at least have provided the means and opportunity for Gregory to impart his message, a forum for thinking aloud. Again one thinks of Augustine, whose decisive retreat on the slopes of Cassiciacum

[61] Cledonius' career: *Carm.* 2.2.1.127; Eulalius' conveyancing difficulties: *Ep.* 14-15; Nicomedes' clerical euergetism: above, n. 59; Rheginus' bequest: *Testamentum Gregorii*, *PG* 37.392a.

[62] Thus Hauser-Meury 1960, 52; McGuckin 2001a, 36.

[63] For the role and status of the pedagogue, see Cribiore 2001, 47-50, 119-120.

was spent in the company of a group intimately associated with his teaching career. If the "council of friends" that Gregory mentions in *De vita sua* had already included the likes of Cledonius and Nicomedes, Gregory's distinctively refined and highbrow brand of monasticism would become less odd than it has tended to seem. Rather than a tortured loner, he would be the leader of a local party, whose members lived out their rarefied lives on their own estates in the hinterland of Nazianzus, while maintaining a properly spiritualized version of the social routines that had traditionally denoted their status.[64]

What is more, some guests at these meetings perhaps wore the student's rather than the monk's cloak. Two other letters to sophists, from the last decade of Gregory's life, provide further evidence for his continuing involvement in the educational system. In one he tells a certain Ablabius, "I hear that you are smitten by the rhetorical profession" (*Ep.* 233.1);[65] in another Adamantius, "while entering a second childhood, into rhetoric" has asked him for some of his text-books (*Ep.* 235.1). Both men are just entering the profession, and had therefore presumably completed their own studies only recently; it is therefore significant that in both cases Gregory's contacts with them were already well-established. His banter to Adamantius stemmed "from our long-standing intimacy" (*Ep.* 235.5); to Ablabius he recalled their friendship and "the many conversations we have had with one another concerning the Good" (*Ep.* 233.2). The setting for both these exchanges is local: Gregory's intimacy with Adamantius (who had clearly had the opportunity to browse in his library)[66] and conversations with Ablabius must have been conducted in Nazianzus itself, probably either while they were learning rhetoric there or during their vacations from more prestigious schools abroad.[67] In the company of such eagerly

[64] For an example of Gregory's creativity in maintaining a connection with aristocratic routines, in relation to wedding celebrations, see McLynn 1998a: "The Other Olympias: Gregory Nazianzen and the Family of Vitalianus", *Zeitschrift für Antike und Christentum* 2, 227-246.

[65] Hauser-Meury 1960, 22, discusses the possible identification with correspondents of Libanius (*Ep.* 921, 1016) and Gregory of Nyssa (*Ep.* 21), and (less plausibly) a Novatian bishop of Nicaea (Socrates *HE* 7.12).

[66] McGuckin 2001a, 397, speaks of this "dispossession" as Gregory's "ultimate farewell to the world"; but the books in question (πυκτία, note-books, as Gregory twice calls them: *Ep.* 235.1, 3) are only part of his library, and may well have been technical treatises and commentaries rather than classical texts.

ambitious young men (and others might be inferred)[68] Gregory will have blurred the distinction between the pastor with his parishioners and the philosopher with his disciples.[69] Once again, therefore, one suspects a deeper continuity in Gregory's habits and behaviour than he acknowledges in his autobiography.

From symposium to school?

The poem to Hellenius also establishes a direct connection between Gregory's literary virtuosity and his monastic milieu, for it presupposes that the monks on whose behalf he spoke were there to enjoy it. Far the best explanation for the poem's apparent inconsistency, whereby Gregory seems to be simultaneously presenting an appeal and celebrating its success, is that it represents an exhibition piece, the product of a specific occasion. Moreover, Gregory's nod towards Carterius, and a similar aside soon afterwards, mentioning his "nurseling" Philadelphius (*Carm.* 2.2.1.198), make little sense unless these men were present in the audience. Here then, we seem to have a semi-improvized production, which was perhaps put into writing as a souvenir for Hellenius. One might proceed to ask how much more of Gregory's remarkable poetic output can be traced to the distinctively cultured ascetic milieu that he created for himself at Nazianzus – which would raise the further question of a possible connection between Gregory's poetry and the educational context in which, it was earlier suggested, his style of monastic commitment was first given expression.

One of Gregory's didactic poems in particular comes tantalizingly close to bridging the gap between his ascetic circle and the local schools. In "On virtue", which sprawls across nearly a thousand fluent verses, Gregory addresses a young man, "nurtured among the ancient books" (*Carm.* 1.2.10.368: someone like Ablabius and Adamantius, then), of whom he has

[67] Gregory's correspondence concerning the education of Nicoboulus indicates that the latter returned home regularly: *Ep.* 175 and 176 both mark the beginnings of new school terms.

[68] Note especially *Ep.* 39, recommending to a court contact one Amazonius, who has given proof to Gregory of his secular *paideusis* as well as his Christian credentials. See also below, p. 237, on Eudoxius.

[69] One again recalls Chrysanthius and Eunapius at Sardis (above, n. 50): not least their long walks together through the city (Eunapius *VS* 502), which will presumably have been the object of considerable local curiosity.

heard glowing reports from certain "friends of God", who have taken it upon themselves to monitor "the young" (1.2.10.4-5). Having advertized the experience, frankness and affection that qualified him to become this youth's ideal counsellor, Gregory embarks on a tour of the four parts of virtue, testing classical exemplars against Christian – entirely to the disadvantage of the former. The sheer range of erudition deployed in this poem shows that Gregory is aiming to impress, and it is unlikely that so much effort was intended for the sole benefit of the addressee.[70] Rather, we might imagine circulation among a broader readership – perhaps including not only the "friends of God", who had a legitimate interest in this response to their own reports, but also among those rival counsellors, the educationalists who would be continuing to peddle Plato and Homer as the best models for emulation.

There are hints elsewhere in Gregory's work, moreover, that he imagined a more constructive role for his poetry, within the traditional educational system. Direct evidence is limited. In *De vita sua* he calls his preferred verse form a "teaching-tool and source of pleasure for the young" (7); in his apologia for verse composition, *eis ta emmetra*, he says that his poems provide "pleasant medicine" for those young men who most delight in *logoi* (*Carm.* 2.1.39.37-46), and indignantly asks his critics what harm there is in leading the young towards communion with God by this pleasurable means (90-91).[71] These remarks, admittedly, are somewhat off-handed – in his autobiography he moves on directly to address his principal (and presumably adult) audience at Constantinople, while in "On his verses" his medicinal thesis is but the second of four excuses for verse composition – but the terms in which he makes the association between his own poetry and literary education are nevertheless significant. Only recently have scholars begun to explore the role of verse composition in the fourth-century rhetorical curriculum; and indeed, one of Gregory's contemporaries could claim a place on the syllabus for his Homeric variations.[72] Moreover, music and poetry featured prominently among the

[70] The analysis at Demoen 1996, 178-181 (and also the synopsis of allusions at 339-342) helpfully conveys the sophistication of the poem; see also the treatment in Kertsch 1983: "Stilistische und literarische Untersuchungsergebnisse aus Gregor von Nazianz' "Carmen de virtute II'", in: Mossay (ed.), *II Symposium Nazianzenum*, 165-178.

[71] On this work, see the chapter (10) by McGuckin in this volume; I remain unconvinced, however, that it was intended to introduce an edition of Gregory's collected verse.

peripheral activities that a training in *logoi* also involved.[73] One text seems, indeed, to have been specifically intended for this particular milieu: a series of didactic distichs takes the form of an acrostic, advertizing the work as Gregory's and announcing it as "a recreation for the young, a kindness done at parting" (*Carm.* 1.2.31).[74]

The student with whose education Gregory became most deeply involved was his great-nephew Nicoboulus; and the *De vita sua*, with its apparently inconsequential reference to the educational function of verse, was probably written just before Nicoboulus departed for the schools of Caesarea – at a time, then, when the edification of "the young" was particularly on Gregory's mind.[75] Although it was argued earlier that the edited correspondence unduly foreshortens Gregory's dealings with the schools of Caesarea, we should not underestimate the boy's importance, as a direct relative, in enabling Gregory to reengage in the game of hellenism. We might therefore ask whether Nicoboulus acted as a channel for the transmission of Gregory's verses into the schools, as he did (or at least as was argued earlier he did) for the letter collection. There is, as usual, no direct evidence; however, two further episodes involving Nicoboulus not only suggest the level of Gregory's involvement in the young man's schooling, but also provide a more concrete impression of the functions of poetry in an "educational" milieu.

Even before Nicoboulus had left home for his studies, he had debated their course in an elaborate versified conversation with his father, in two long poems. The first of these, addressed to Nicoboulus senior ostensibly

[72] Cribiore 2001, 225-230, quoting Libanius *Ep.* 990 on the pagan prefect Tatianus' epic at 227; McGuckin 2001a, 376, proposes that Gregory's didactic verses were intended "for the education of children in grammatical schools".

[73] Milovanovic-Barham 1997: "Gregory of Nazianzus' Ars Poetica (In suos versus: Carmen 2.1.39)", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5, 497-510, emphasizes the recreational function of music.

[74] The phrase ἐξοδίη χάρις is difficult: is Gregory describing his poem as a deathbed legacy, or (my preferred reading) literally, as a parting gift to a student setting out for school?

[75] *De Vita Sua* is usually assigned to the period immediately following Gregory's commemorative oration for Basil, *Or.* 43, which in turn is conventionally dated to January 382 (see further Jungck 1974, 169); Nicoboulus entered Stagirius' school after Gregory had resumed his duties as bishop (*Ep.* 188.1; cf. 167.3), the period from spring/autumn 382 to early summer 383.

by his son, is almost certainly ghosted by Gregory.[76] In it the son first demands his due "as a man, the son of a good father": that is, "the power of *logoi*" (*Carm.* 2.2.4.58). He then presents an imposing catalogue of the "noble" disciplines, beginning with rhetoric, history, grammar, and logic; which (he says) will provide the foundation for a commitment to more spiritual investigation into the Christian scriptures and eventual contemplation of the Trinity (2.2.4.59-79). The exemplar for this progression is "the uncle of my mother", Gregory himself, under whose wing the fledgling Nicoboulus seeks to take to the air (2.2.4.89). We also possess the father's reply, endorsing the project in equally fluent iambics, and celebrating still more enthusiastically the uses of literary culture. The elder Nicoboulus formally sends his son on his way – whether it be to Athens, Beirut or Alexandria (*Carm.* 2.2.5.226-229) – confident that the guidance of such teachers as Gregory will yield good results (2.2.5.281). It is possible that Gregory also scripted this part of the dialogue, but there is no good reason to deny authorship to Nicoboulus himself, who is specifically acknowledged as a poet (*Carm.* 2.2.4.114-117).[77] And a careful reading of this second poem suggests that the father was actually modifying the son's plan, reasserting conventional values of family and property against the giddy calling of ascetic withdrawal (*Carm.* 2.2.5.116-159). This, then, looks like a stylized version of a genuine debate; and since the best reason to versify the arguments would be to dramatize them, we might envisage young Nicoboulus giving a public reading of the poem that his great-uncle had written for him, perhaps indeed at another of Gregory's symposia, before his father rose to reply. Such an exhibition of young Nicoboulus' cultural prowess would offer his father an early return on the considerable investment that education represented, and before the local audience that ultimately mattered most – in other words, this was an example of the "dancing for friends" that Gregory had himself disavowed.

[76] Gregory created a similar son-to-father appeal in *Carm.* 2.2.3, datable to the same period. See McLynn 1998b; also Sykes 1984: "Reflections on Gregory Nazianzen's *Poemata quae spectant ad alios*" in Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica* 18:3, 551-556.

[77] Demoen 1996, 22 n. 8, insists vehemently on Gregory's authorship; but he is reacting to claims that Gregory could *not* have written the poem, rather than that Nicoboulus could have done. In favour of Nicoboulus' authorship we might note the technique of first paraphrasing and then gently criticizing points made in the first poem (*Carm.* 2.2.5.21-23, 51-60); also the claim that only the proud, and not the good, fall victim to *phthonos* (*Carm.* 2.2.5.215-216); and not least the inclusion, between Athens and Alexandria, of the famous law school of Beirut, which Gregory is unlikely to have recommended (*Carm.* 2.2.5.226-229).

The second example concerns a third rhetorician at Caesarea, who became Gregory's principal point of contact over Nicoboulus' schooling: Eudoxius, a Christian whom he would gently prod towards conversion to a properly philosophical life. Eudoxius' exact role in Nicoboulus' education has perplexed scholars – but when Gregory says that he was performing a "rhetorical" task at the behest of Nicoboulus' father but a "sophistic" one for Gregory himself (*Ep.* 176.6), he uses a distinction that is fully explained in Libanius, between the one sophist who headed a municipally-endowed rhetorical school, and his non-stipendiary assistants, the rhetors.[78] Eudoxius was therefore Eustochius' assistant. There also survives a small sheaf of commendations that Gregory had written for Eudoxius in the 360s, when the latter went to seek his fortune in Constantinople (*Ep.* 37, 38, 181).[79] Eudoxius' hopes were evidently disappointed, and the absence from the collection of any letter to or about him during the next fifteen years seems – to judge from Gregory's elaborate prelude when he first entrusts Nicoboulus to him (*Ep.* 174) – to reflect a genuine break in communications. This long intermission suggests on the one hand the bleakly competitive nature of the rhetorical game, where even family friends could be frozen out from a patron's portfolio, and on the other suggests the remarkable resilience of late antique *amicitia*, even after long dormant periods. The publication in the letter collection of these early letters, with their enthusiastic endorsements of Eudoxius, meanwhile, might again imply that as Nicoboulus' teacher he was an early reader – and user – of the letter anthology.

Eudoxius was also part of the audience for Gregory's poetry, taking exception on one occasion to some verses of Gregory's that "the wretched Valentinus" had "vomited forth" (*Ep.* 176.1-3). Here, by bluffly deprecating such unprofessional overreaction "when someone has had the audacity to write such lampoons", Gregory avoids denying responsibility; he resorts instead first to Homeric apostrophe, then to flexing his episcopal authority.

[78] Libanius *Or.* 31; with discussion in Wolf 1952: *Vom Schulwesen der Spätantike: Studien zu Libanius*, 60 ff. Hauser-Meury 1960, 67-68, suggests that Eudoxius acted as a private tutor.

[79] *Ep.* 181, recommending Eudoxius to the eminent Saturninus, has traditionally been dated much later, to 383 (Hauser-Meury 1960, 154; Gallay 1967, 70, 160); but the three letters' similarity in phrasing indicates contemporaneity, and the reference to the "height" of Saturninus' office need not mean his consulate of 383.

We can therefore infer that the offending verses were indeed his own, and might envisage a literary gathering where Valentinus had humiliated Eudoxius by turning against him one of the bishop's verse satires.[80] The occasion was certainly public, and was perhaps witnessed by students, for Nicoboulus delivered this letter to Eudoxius and had presumably – since Gregory twits the latter for not having written himself – been Gregory's informant concerning the incident.

This letter to Eudoxius is the only direct evidence we have for the contemporary reception of Gregory's verses. It is of some significance, in terms of the argument presented in this paper, that of only two attested users of his poetry, at least one was a professional rhetorician;[81] hardly less important, however, is the difficulty we encounter when trying to establish what was at stake in this incident. For this same pattern, where verifiable connections can be identified between Gregory and a literary milieu and at the same time deep uncertainties remain about their implications, has recurred at every stage of the argument in this paper: concerning Gregory's dealings with the rhetors of Caesarea, his professional teaching career, and the cultural tone of his ascetic commitment at Nazianzus. We must therefore take into account not only the sheer number of identifiable points of contact between Gregory, his writings, and the world of professional paideia, but also the impossibility of pursuing any of these individual leads to a definite conclusion. Although many classically-trained churchmen in late antiquity exhibited a nostalgia for the books on which they had been nourished, none can match Gregory in the scope and the persistence – or, on the other hand, the complexity – of his connections with the schools and the classical curriculum. The challenge facing Gregory's interpreters, therefore, is to do justice not only to the extent of these connections, but also to their elusiveness.

[80] For brief discussion, see McLynn 1997: "The voice of conscience: Gregory Nazianzen in retirement", in: *Vescovi e pastori in epoca teodosiana* II, 299-308, at 300.

[81] The attractive suggestion by Hauser-Meury 1960, 178, that Valentinus was also a rhetor, cannot be confirmed.

12

Two Gregories and three genres: Autobiography, autohagiography and hagiography

Stephanos Efthymiadis

In recent decades the study of hagiography has become a serious area of research for scholars investigating the world of late antiquity and later. This scholarship has been decisive in modifying the received view, especially in matters of social history and mentality, and it has been crucial in restoring the reputation of hagiography itself. Nowadays no serious anthology would exclude texts such as the Lives of St Antony, St Symeon the Holy Fool for Christ, St Theodore of Sykeon, or St Philaretos the Merciful, regardless of its field: literature or history.

Despite, however, its meritorious contribution to expanding our horizons, this restoration of hagiography may have resulted in our viewing the genre in narrower terms than those envisaged by the Byzantines. The hagiography of ascetics or holy fools for Christ may not have enjoyed among the Byzantines the exalted place and wide reception it enjoys in academic circles today. However attractive they may appear from the literary point of view, these works were linked by and large to the limited appeal of their heroes. For, with the exception of a handful of hagiographical classics, monastic biographies were confined to a specific area and a specific historical period. Such saints as Theodore of Sykeon and Philaretos the Merciful could not have enjoyed as much success and acceptance in Byzantine times as they do today. Beyond any literary merit that they may have, what mattered essentially to the Byzantine literary taste was the name and fame of the hero-saint. It may have consisted of stereotypes and clichés, but it was the *passio* of a famous martyr or the *vita* of a Church father that the Byzantines consistently preferred. Martyrs and Church fathers were seen as the defenders *par excellence* of the Christian faith.

Nonetheless, if the literature of the Christian martyrs is a much-studied subject in terms of scholarly research, a systematic treatment of the Church fathers' hagiographical *Nachleben* remains a *desideratum*. Unlike the passions of the Christian martyrs, the biographies of the Church fathers were composed with high expectations and varied greatly in terms of literary

form. Whether in the form of a vita, an *enkomion* or a funeral oration, this kind of hagiography was rarely based on the hagiographer's personal experience or investigation. As many centuries usually separated the author from his hero's lifetime, it was the product rather of literary study. Unlike the holy ascetic or abbot, who may have left only the testimony of his *typikon*, the Church father would have left a large literary legacy, namely treatises, orations and letters, to serve as source material for hagiographers.

To be sure, this kind of hagiography is lacking in demons, miracles, healings, prophecies, dreams and all the other ingredients of attractive story-telling. It is a literature mainly apologetic in nature, constrained by literary formalities and *topoi*, or, in other words, one which is less open to inspiration. The information it provides hardly exceeds that gathered from a study of the saint's own writings or other contemporary sources; and, unless they still resound with the atmosphere of a continued polemic, as in the case of Palladius' *Dialogus* dealing with John Chrysostom, their reading turns out to be something of a disappointment, if only from the historian's or theologian's perspective. The picture becomes more positive if accretions, modifications and revisions can be detected, mostly on the literary level. This kind of analysis may indeed be rewarding and reveal how a particular author and particular society portrayed, evaluated, or imagined a Church father.

In most of these respects, the dossier on St Gregory of Nazianzus is a case in point. Its chronological range is remarkable, its contributors among the most qualified, its variety responding to an interest in the saint that was constantly renewing itself. However, compared to the great theologians of his age and later, Gregory's name and fame imposed certain idiosyncratic features that could hardly be avoided by his biographers. To begin with, a comprehensive account of his life was available in the form of first- and third-person autobiographies, often contradictory in tone. In fact, the first biographer of Gregory was none other than Gregory himself! Several scholars have recently made a good case that in these and other writings he projected a self-created holiness,[1] but, significantly, long before their publi-

[1] Among the various studies treating this question are those by Bernardi 1993: "Trois autobiographies de Grégoire de Nazianze", in: Baslez, Hoffmann & Pernot (eds.), *L'invention de l'autobiographie, d'Hésiode à saint Augustin*, 155-165 (who states that "parler de sa famille est déjà parler de soi"); Van Dam 1995: "Self-Representation in the Will of Gregory of Nazianzos", *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 46, 118-148, esp. 137-143; McLynn 1998b: "A Self-Made Holy Man: The Case of Gregory Nazianzen", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, 463-483 (an excellent analysis); Elm 1999: "Inventing the →

cations, such works as the *Carmen de se ipso*, the Oration 42 (*De se ipso in concilio Constantinopolitano 150 episcoporum*), the Orations 2 and 12 (*De fuga sua* and *Ad patrem*) as well as the Orations 10 and 9 (*Ante* and *Post consecrationem*), were all given entries by the Bollandists in the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* (nos 730a-c, t, u, v). Compared to later "medieval" and "monastic" instances of such holy men as Athanasios of Athos, Christodoulos of Patmos, or Neophytos the Recluse, whose self-promotion of holiness rested largely on the composition of a single testament or a typikon, Gregory was a unique case in his repeated claim to a "holy self".[2]

Furthermore, whether autobiographical or not, the works of Gregory of Nazianzus lay on the desk of every learned Byzantine, thus constituting something of a reference library. Both his indisputable eloquence and his literary stance towards classical learning made him a Christian model of rhetoric and style.[3] Finally, both before and after the Council of Chalcedon, Gregory was to be acknowledged as *the Theologian*, an authoritative title deriving from his critical role in the Church's christological settlement. Naturally, such a multifaceted identity could not easily be disregarded by any of his future biographers.

The plethora of 44 named Byzantine and post-Byzantine scholiasts and encomiasts of Gregory, listed in Jan Sajdak's *Historia critica scholiastarum et commentatorum Gregorii Nazianzeni*, reflects the constant interest in his life and work. Discussing in some detail the work of one of the later authors in this list, Theodore Methochites' unpublished *Logos*, and inquiring into its possible models, Ihor Ševčenko singled out the names of Gregory the Presbyter, Niketas David Paphlagon (end of ninth-first half of tenth century), John Geometres (ca. 930-ca. 990), Michael Psellos (1018-ca.

'Father of the Church': Gregory of Nazianzus' 'Farewell to the Bishops' (Or. 42) in its Historical Context", in Felten & Jaspert (eds.), *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter*, 2-7; and McGuckin 2001a: "Autobiography as Apologia in St Gregory Nazianzen", in: Wiles & Yarnold (eds.), *Studia Patristica*, Vol. XXXVII, 160-177; and Van Dam 2003a: *Becoming Christian: The Conversion of Roman Cappadocia*, 171-185.

[2] On these and other cases of monastic fathers "projecting" a holy self through their typika, see M. Hinterberger 1999: *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz*, 208-230.

[3] See Kennedy 1983: *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, Princeton 1983, 215-239. Cf. also Noret 1983: "Grégoire de Nazianze, l'auteur le plus cité après la Bible dans la littérature ecclésiastique byzantine,' in: Mossay (ed.), *II Symposium Nazianzenum*, 259-266, and Crimi 1992: "Aspetti della fortuna di Gregorio Nazianzeno nel mondo bizantino tra VI e IX secolo", in : Moreschini & Menestrina (eds.), *Gregorio Nazianzeno teologo e scrittore*, 199-216.

1081) and Thomas Magistros (first half of the fourteenth century).[4] However, not all five authors can claim to have composed a "biography", whether this is perceived merely as "an account of the life of a man from birth to death"[5] or, more broadly, as also including the saint's future recognition, posthumous miracles or other aspects of his/her cult. Moreover, though listed in the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* (no 729), Psellos' *Logos* should be left out, as it has no hagiographical or biographical aspirations whatsoever. As a matter of fact, it is no more than praise of the stylistic virtues of his favourite patristic author, which surpassed those of a long list of antique authors.[6] Admired as he was for the beauty of his style, Gregory of Nazianzus was perhaps the only Byzantine saint to have received praise that cannot be ascribed to hagiography.

To Sajdak's and Ševčenko's lists may be added two important authors whose compositions again cannot claim to be pure biographies. The first is Sophronios of Jerusalem (550-638), known to have penned an *Enkomion* (*CPG* 7659), of which only a short fragment is now extant in Greek, but which is preserved in its entirety in a Georgian, still unedited, translation. The Greek fragment is contained in the florilegium of dyothelite inspiration in codex 86 of the National Museum of Ochrid and is still unpublished.[7] The second author is the learned emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos, to whom the composition of a long *translatio* of Gregory's relics has been ascribed.[8]

It seems that the writing of a typical and fully-fledged biography of Gregory in Byzantium was undertaken solely by Gregory the Presbyter.

[4] See Ševčenko 1996: "The *Logos* on Gregory of Nazianzus by Theodore Metochites", in: Seibr (ed.), *Geschichte und Kultur der Palaiologenzeit*, 221-222.

[5] This is Momigliano's definition in *The Development of Greek Biography*, 11.

[6] Ed. Mayer 1911: "Psellos' Rede über den rhetorischen Charakter des Gregorios von Nazianz", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 20, 48-60; and Lévy 1912: *Michaelis Pselli de Gregorii theologi charactere iudicium*, 46-63; for an analysis of this text see Wilson 1983: *Scholars of Byzantium*, 169-172 and Maltese 1994: "Michele Psello commentatore di Gregorio di Nazianzo: note per una lettera dei Teologica", in: *Σύνδεσμος. Studi in honore di Rosario Anastasi*, Vol. II, 289-309.

[7] See von Schönborn 1972: *Sophrone de Jérusalem. Vie monastique et confession dogmatique*, 111-112.

[8] See Flusin 1999: "Le panégyrique de Constantin VII Porphyrogénète pour la Translation des reliques de Grégoire le Théologien (*BHG* 728)", *Revue des Études Byzantines* 57, 5-97; cf. Flusin 1998: "L'empereur et le théologien. À propos du retour des reliques de Grégoire de Nazianze (*BHG* 728)", in: Ševčenko & Hutter (eds.), *AETOS. Studies in honour of Cyril Mango presented to him on April 14, 1998*, 137-153.

This vita (*BHG* 723) is now available in a critical edition, including French translation and extensive commentary, by Xavier Lequeux in the Greek series of the *Corpus Christianorum*.[9] Gregory the Presbyter is a rather shadowy figure whose name and office are also attested in the title of an *Enkomion* to the 318 Fathers of the first Nicene council. The mention of a failed siege of this town by the Assyrians, identified by Cyril Mango as that by the Arabs in 725/726, convincingly makes this *Enkomion* a work of the eighth century.[10] By contrast, devoid as it is of any concrete detail about the saint's cult or other aspects of his posterity, the vita of Gregory of Nazianzus is hard to date.

The recent editor of St Gregory's vita was negative regarding the identification of its author with the encomiast of the Nicaean fathers, both on stylistic and chronological grounds which need not be discussed here. Lequeux placed its composition in the time-span between 543 and 638. Although doubts have been cast especially regarding its *terminus post quem*, it is absolutely legitimate to consider the vita by Gregory the Presbyter a work dating from this precise period.[11]

Judging by the 179 manuscripts in which it has come down to us, not to mention another eight that are known to have been lost or damaged, the vita by Gregory was a work that enjoyed tremendous success.[12] As it was also translated into Latin, Church Slavonic and Oriental languages, it could compete fairly, in terms of diffusion, with such texts as the *vita Antonii* or the *Pratum Spirituale*. Included either in Menologia (January) or appended to the collection of Gregory's homilies or other works, the text was regarded as no less than the authorized biography of the saint. This consideration may explain why the name of Gregory the Presbyter as author is omitted in a good number of manuscripts, at least several among

[9] See Lequeux (ed.) 2001: *Gregorii presbyteri vita sancti Gregorii theologi*.

[10] Mango 1994: "Notes d'épigraphie et d'archéologie: Constantinople, Nicée", *Travaux et Mémoires* 12, 356-357.

[11] For the whole argument, see Lequeux 2001, 13-16. See, however, B. Flusin' review of Lequeux's edition in *Analecta Bollandiana* 121 (2003), 180. The use of the sobriquet Iannis to style the notorious Maximus the Cynic, bringing to mind as it does the Age of Second Iconoclasm and John Grammatikos, made Ševčenko suspect a date as late as the mid-ninth century. Yet, as he himself admitted, this chronology is difficult to establish, see Ševčenko 1996, 225 n. 27; for others sharing a similar view see Lequeux 2001: 10 n. 14; for a use of the surname in a text related to First Iconoclasm, see Gero 1995: "Jannes and Jambres in the *Vita Stephani Iunioris* (*BHG* 1666)", *Analecta Bollandiana* 113, 281-292.

[12] As Lequeux notes (29): "on recopia le texte à toutes les époques".

those dated before the twelfth century and used by Lequeux for his edition. Having no real rival and enjoying authority, the vita fell into anonymity.

Anonymity, however, and self-effacement were not Gregory the Presbyter's intentions. After expressing his apologies for his venture in inviting the Christian flock to take part in a spiritual banquet, the author affirms that he was prompted to do so on two grounds: no-one had ever produced a full account of Gregory's life, and his father had urged him to undertake the task. It was not possible therefore to refuse his begetter's demand, the more so as he was a bishop (*patrikôs kai despotikôs*). Gregory the Presbyter may have been insinuating here that, not unlike the holy figure he set out to portray, he also had a bishop-father who imposed his wishes upon his son.

The preface concludes with a warning: the holy congregation must not expect his story to be accurate in every detail. After all, neither was this what he had promised to do, nor had he at his disposal an already extant vita to rely upon. Imitating the work of a stone-builder (*mimoumai tous lithologous*), he had pieced together excerpts from Gregory's orations (§1.41-44). Comparing these preliminary statements to what we read in the pages that follow, we could assert that his composition is an elaborate interweaving of borrowings from the writings of his namesake. A few lines before the end of his narrative, when referring to Gregory's solitary quietude at Arianzos, the place where he composed his verses, the Presbyter openly avows that this was the source from which most of his material had been taken (§22). Byzantine hagiography knows of a few similar instances where saints' vitae were anticipated by autobiographies or accounts that were autobiographical in character, yet the case of the two Gregories has no real parallel.[13]

The *De vita sua* being Gregory the Presbyter's primary source, Lequeux's inquiry brought to light a number of what one might call the hagiographer's secondary sources, namely the Orations 4-8, 14, 18 and 43, the two letters to Kledonios (*Ep.* 101-102), poems against Apollinarios, etc.[14] In principle, Gregory the Presbyter proceeded no differently than any other of his hero's biographers, medieval or modern. What was really different was the genre he came to serve, namely hagiography.

Lequeux has compiled a list of what separates the two Gregories in

[13] See the examples collected by Hinterberger 2000: "Autobiography and hagiography in Byzantium", *Symbolae Osloenses* 75, 147-148.

[14] Lequeux 2001, 21-25.

terms of depicting and interpreting reality, thereby demonstrating that the vita is not a mere "cut and paste" from the Gregorian corpus, but rather an attempt to paint the portrait of a saint.[15] To be sure, hagiography is the literary equivalent of religious painting, but this is not as simple as it may sound. To achieve such a serious purpose as the promotion of a holy figure that carried so great a weight with the Byzantines, it required good handling of a number of literary means: language, style and, above all, method of excerpting. By definition, the vita of Gregory was not "une vie de saint parmi d'autres", as its recent editor puts it.[16] Its appeal in Byzantine society was based on merits that went beyond the mere adaptation of elements of the hero's eventful life to suit the format of hagiography.

Writing a hagiography of a Church father such as Gregory was not, *prima facie*, a difficult task. The author did not always have to invent but, in many instances, could borrow the standard hagiographical *topoi* from a number of works where the Cappadocian father sketches a self-portrait. Referring in his *De vita sua* to his birth and childhood, Gregory did not even refrain from stating that he was conceived following the "Sarah-like" prayers of his mother and that, as a child, he behaved as a *puer-senex*.[17] The profile of a man predestinated to be a holy figure is also implied in *De rebus suis* where Nonna and Gregory are presented as Hannah and the new Samuel, dedicated to God at birth (vv. 425-432, *PG* 37, 1001-1002, cf. 1 Sam. 1.9-20). The same holds for his later transfer from Cappadocia to Constantinople, which the saint himself presents as his response to a divine command.[18]

As a literary term and "genre", *autohagiography* is a relatively recent "discovery" for Byzantinists and usually associated with self-sanctification. Catia Galatariotou was the first to view from this perspective the writings of an ascetic active on twelfth-century Cyprus, St Neophytos the Recluse.[19]

[15] Lequeux 2001, 25-27.

[16] Lequeux 2001, 3-5.

[17] On this topos, see Festugière 1960: "Lieux-communs littéraires et thèmes de folk-lore dans l'hagiographie primitive", *Wiener Studien* 73, 137-139, and Kalogeras 2001: "'What do they think about children?' Perceptions of childhood in early Byzantine literature", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 25, 9ff. Nonna is designated as Sarah also in *Or.* 2.103.5-6 and in *Or.* 18.41, *PG* 35.1040C, but only in the sense that she was the spiritual mother of Gregory.

[18] *Or.* 33.13; *Or.* 43.2; *De se ipso et de episcopis*, 2.1.12.79, *PG* 37.1172. Cf. Lequeux 2001, 240.

[19] Galatariotou 1991: *The Making of a Saint: The Life, Times and Sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse*, 75-147; see however the objections of Hinterberger 1999, 230-233; and Hinterberger 2000, 144-145.

Writing from a similar viewpoint, Alexander Kazhdan, in his analysis of the vita of St Auxentios by Michael Psellos, coined the term "hagio-autobiography", given that, by making several literary adjustments to the received story-frame, the eleventh-century polymath adapted the saint's life to the circumstances of his own.[20] Essentially, this vita was no less than a "disguised autobiography" or an example of "autobiographical hagiography", as Joseph A. Munitiz preferred to style it.[21] The same scholar also employed this and similar terms in his discussion of three thirteenth-century authors who, in one way or another, projected a "holy self" through their autobiographies. In sum, "autohagiography" as a term can entail either autobiographical accounts projecting a "holy self", or pieces of hagiography adapted as veiled autobiographies. Both types of account bear the marks of a divinely oriented self-portrait with an eye on posterity.

However, autohagiography is one thing and hagiography another. A brief analysis of the vita of his namesake may suffice to show how Gregory the hagiographer followed the method of cautious and balanced excerpting, while allowing himself a certain degree of originality.[22] In accordance with the prescribed patterns, the reader-listener is introduced to the native town of the saint. It was not Nazianzus, we are told, that made Gregory famous, but Gregory who gave the town a reputation. Mention of his parents follows, but not their names. These are to be revealed much later in the narrative (§11), in mentioning their demise. Gregory the Elder is styled Abraham, a synkrisis of a holy man's father, familiar to all readers of hagiography and absent neither from *De vita sua* nor from other "autobiographical" works in the *Corpus Nazianzenum* (*De vita sua* v. 53; *Or.* 2.103.3-4; *Or.* 18.41, *PG* 35.1040c; *Or.* 43.37.10-11). In these writings St Gregory refers to his father as "truly a patriarch, a second Abraham", but with one exception: in the encomium to Gregory's sister Gorgonia, Gregory the Elder becomes the Abraham who abandoned his paternal faith and idol-worship in order to convert to the true faith (*Or.* 8.4.1-7). It is precisely this designation that Gregory's biographer was to adopt in his vita.

Given that hagiography cannot bear too much reality, the father-son relationship is presented in terms of a steady obedience on the part of the

[20] Kazhdan 1983: "Hagiographical notes (1-4)", *Byzantion* 53, 546-556.

[21] Munitiz 1992: "Hagiographical autobiography in the 13th century", *Byzantinoslavica* 53, 243-249.

[22] For cases where Gregory differs from what is transmitted in the *Corpus Nazianzenum*, see Lequeux 2001, 25-27.

son, without letting "the roar of some troubled waters" resound.[23] In contrast to Gregory's autobiographical poem, which devotes more verses to his mother (21) than to his father (6), father and mother are now assigned equal space in the narrative. Hagiographical "priorities" also lie behind the presentation of the first critical episode in Gregory' life. Higher education involved much travelling at that time and the saint experienced a terrible sea-storm when sailing from Alexandria to Athens. Instead of reproducing the hero's fearful sentiments so vividly recorded in his verses,[24] Gregory the Presbyter picks up the much less dramatic account of the same episode in Oration 18, no doubt because this better suited a hagiographical narrative: whereas all the passengers and the crew were weeping on account of the danger of physical death, the saint feared for the loss of his soul since he had not yet been baptized (*Or.* 18.31, *PG* 35.1024C). As the same oration has it, his parents, alerted by a nocturnal phantasy (*phantasia*), gave their distant support through their prayers. Replacing phantasy with dream, and inserting the young sailor's vision about his mother Nonna grabbing hold of the ship, the hagiographer proceeds to the first synkrisis. The salvation of the ship is attributed to Gregory just as Elijah made Israel believe in God by opposing the idol-worship of the Sidonians.[25]

The comparisons multiply as the action is transferred to "Athens and letters".[26] The praise of the saint's virtues is also extended to his classmate and friend Basil. To be sure, this is the appropriate section for comparisons and for citing biblical figures and Greek philosophers. As far as such virtues

[23] McGuckin 2001: *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, 2.

[24] First and foremost, in *De vita sua* (*Carm.* 2.1.11.129-139, ed. Jungck, 60), but also in *De rebus suis* (*Carm.* 2.1.1.307-319, *PG* 37.993-994); cf. also McGuckin 2001, 49-51. On the diverse character (programmatic, elegiac, polemical, apologetic) of Gregory's autobiographical poems, see Demoen 1996: *Pagan and Biblical Exempla in Gregory Nazianzen. A Study in Rhetoric and Hermeunetics*, 62-63.

[25] The third version of the same event in *De rebus suis* (*Carm.* 2.1.1.307-321; *PG* 37.993-994) claims only that the "current pain" caused by Caesarius' death was more worrying than that experienced during the sea-storm. On the whole question, see Coulie 1988: "Les trois récits de la tempête subie par Grégoire de Nazianze", in: Coulie (ed.), *Versiones orientales, repertorium ibericum et studia ad editiones curandas*, 157-180. On the role of dreams in Gregory's œuvre, see Miller 1994: *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture*, 242-249.

[26] On the student life of Gregory in Athens, see Bernardi 1990: "Un regard sur la vie étudiante à Athènes au milieu du IVe siècle après J.C.", *Revue des Études Grecques* 103, 79-94; and McGuckin 2001, 35-83. Cf. also Samuel Rubenson's chapter (6) in the present volume.

as continence or intelligence are concerned, both Gregory and Basil are likened to Elijah, John the Baptist or Job; as for prudence, justice and poverty, Xenocrates, Aristides or Diogenes were equal or inferior. In the relevant chapter of Oration 43, these references serve a double purpose: they demonstrate on the one hand that both Cappadocians had benefited from classical learning; on the other, they point to the supremacy of Christianity.[27]

Similar comparisons with classical figures recur when Gregory meets Basil again in Pontos with the intention of practising Christian philosophy, namely of living as an ascetic: "by instituting their monastic rules", we are told, "they both proved more peaceful than Lycurgus, more severe than Solon, more righteous than Minos, and imitators of the loftiest of all, Moses" (§6.12-15).[28] Not long afterwards, however, Gregory the Elder's entreaties, following Caesarius' death, succeed in bringing his son back to Cappadocia. This is when the saint devotes his energies to the struggle against the Arian heretics and Julian's persecution of Christians. On that occasion, Gregory the Presbyter quotes his hero's memories from Athens of when he first witnessed the young Julian's mean character, his troublesome behaviour, his impertinent laughter, and his entire body moving back and forth (§8.42-54). These were traits of a person who, as foreseen by his schoolmate, was to play a disastrous role as far as the Christians were concerned. Clearly, this borrowing from the second diatribe *Contra Iulianum*, where Gregory's clairvoyance is made plain, could not have been easy for a hagiographer to ignore (*Or.* 5.23).

The consecration of Gregory as bishop of Sasima and the complications this involved required a similar hagiographical handling. As with many Byzantine saints, consecration arose despite his own will and inner desire

[27] See the remarks of Wilson 1993: "Centaurs and Σύγκρισις in Gregory Nazianzen", in: Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica*, Vol. XXVII, 119.

[28] On Gregory's friendship with Basil, see White 1992: *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*, 61-70; Rousseau 1994: *Basil of Caesarea*, 234-239; Norris 2000: "Your Honor, My Reputation: St. Gregory of Nazianzus's Funeral Oration on St. Basil the Great", in: Hägg & Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, 140-159; Konstan 2000: "How to Praise a Friend: St. Gregory of Nazianzus's Funeral Oration for St. Basil the Great", ibid., 160-179; Børtnes 2000: "Eros Transformed: Same-Sex Love and Divine Desire. Reflections on the Erotic Vocabulary in St. Gregory of Nazianzus's Speech on St. Basil the Great", ibid., 180-193; Van Dam 1986: "Emperor, Bishops, and Friends in Late Antiquity", *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 37, 53-76; and idem 2003: *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia*, 174-184.

for isolation.[29] Naturally enough, in the vita the *tyrannis* of the father who lay behind his ordination and nomination to a bishopric, is totally glossed over.[30] Once again, his biographer leaves out the derogatory description of his bishopric in *De vita sua*, and simply hints at its bad location on the imperial road, which was distracting for those who longed for quietude. Also, his almost immediate flight into the mountains is "replaced" by his joining a hospice for the sick. More significant, however, is the rewording of Gregory's declaration that he never performed any episcopal duties in what he called in his verses the "no man's land between the two bishops" (*De vita sua*, v. 456). Aware that Canon XV of the first Nicene council prohibited bishops from moving from one see to another, the hagiographer rephrased Gregory's views with an impersonal syntax: "it is said that in Sasima the father (i.e. Gregory) performed no offering, no ordination, no other activity to which bishops are accustomed" (§10.29-31). What lay behind this sentence was a serious consideration, namely to dismiss the charge that Gregory's election as bishop of Constantinople was uncanonical.

Then came the death of Gregory's father and his adamant refusal to be enthroned to the bishopric of Nazianzus both before and after his flight to Seleucia. To dispel any suspicion of misanthropic behaviour, a digression is inserted here on the philanthropic activity of Basil, to whom Gregory offered both collaboration and support. The following chapters are devoted to the saint's days in Constantinople. Prompted both by a divine call and by his friend Basil's counsels, Gregory comes to Byzantium in order to fight heresy. The narrative is permeated here with biblical references. The saint is portrayed successively as Moses, David and Stephen the First Martyr, until he too receives, by virtue of his confrontation with the Apollinarians, the title of martyr, without having suffered any danger or torture (§13.34-38). Once again, Gregory the Presbyter elaborates on his namesake's relevant autohagiographical allusions, where Gregory himself has sketched the profile of a martyr pelted by stones, "that banquet of

[29] To mention but a few examples from different centuries, Theodore of Sykeon (d. 613), George of Amastris (eighth cent.), Gregory of Assos (eleventh-twelfth cent.).

[30] Cf. Elm 2000: "'The Diagnostic Gaze': Gregory of Nazianzus' Theory of Orthodox Priesthood in his Orations 6 *De Pace* and 2 *Apologia de Fuga sua*", in: Elm, Rebillard & Romano (eds.), *Orthodoxie, christianisme, histoire*, 91-92.

mine" (*tên emên pandaisian*), or carried off to the city eparch "like a murderer".[31]

A similar biblical atmosphere is created in the hagiographer's portrayal of Maximus the Cynic. Since hagiography is a genre with an inclination for negative figures, Gregory the Presbyter does not miss this opportunity to relate the whole episode in great detail. He first attaches to his anti-hero the surname Iannis, the magician who opposed Moses, and then those of Nabal and Judas; not surprisingly, most of this account is in line with what is reported in *De vita sua*. However, whereas Gregory's comments on Julian's sinister body language and disposition (similar to those in his invectives) were not left unquoted, the physical description of a perverse Maximus introduced in the same poem is passed over in silence by the hagiographer.[32] The particular kind of hagiography that Gregory the Presbyter professed did not embrace the demonic attributes that monastic hagiography was keen to graft upon negative figures; nor would it record the excesses of autohagiography. Above all, the hagiographer's moderate stance towards Maximus was dictated by his desire to redress the balance between reality and Gregory's excessively hostile tone. In a fictitious apology, the saint is presented as addressing the Constantinopolitan mob and stating that in his failure to foresee Maximus' mean character, he was distracted by placing too great an importance on a former pagan who embraced Christianity and "worshipped the Trinity instead of Hercules" (§15.13-17). Significantly, by placing greater emphasis on the anti-hero's negative characteristics, the hagiographer might have heaped additional blame on the hero who had offered him various kinds of support.

Towards the end of the narrative, the hagiographer constructs – using similar simplifications and amplifications – his own version of events, such as the elevation of his hero to the patriarchal throne, the summoning of the Constantinopolitan council, and his final resignation. As befits a writer

[31] See *De vita sua*, vv. 665-669, ed. Jungck, 86; also *Carm.* 2.1.12.103-105 ("On himself and the bishops"), *PG* 37.1173; 2.1.15.11 ("On himself on his return from Constantinople"), ibid., 1251; 2.1.33.12 ("To Christ"), ibid., 1306; *Ep.* 77.3 and 95; also *Or.* 42.27.20-21; cf. Lequeux's commentary, 244-245. Similarly, Basil is declared by Gregory to be "a martyr without blood bearing the wreath without having suffered any tortures" in *Or.* 43.57.25-28.

[32] See *De vita sua* (*Carm.* 2.1.11.750-754: "There was amongst us in the city an effeminate creature, // a phantom from Egypt, a pestilential fanatic, // a dog, a puppy, a street-walker, // a disaster with no sense of smell, no bark, a great hulking monster..." (trans. White 1996: Gregory of Nazianzus, *Autobiographical Poems*, 69).

whose literary œuvre concentrates on his stormy years in New Rome, his hagiographer pays analogous attention to this period in his own narrative (§§12-21).[33] Gregory's autobiographical poetry is once again a major source of inspiration for his namesake, but, again, turned into prose and undergoing the necessary hagiographical whitewashing. In a rhetorical apostrophe, where the Presbyter derogatorily contrasts rhetoric with philosophy, the introvert Gregory of Nazianzus is given the extrovert characterization of a farmer and a physician-healer of souls. We are eventually told that after his final homeward journey, the saint devoted his last energies to fighting the Apollinarians, whose views then spread throughout his native town, and to composing orations in verse, an activity closely related to "the contemplation of his own past".[34]

In terms of what we have come to regard as traditional hagiography, this vita surprises us by its abrupt ending. In fact, it lacks any elaborate rhetorical peroration. There is no mention of burial, no mention of a day of celebration, no hint at any posthumous cult. Only a final address is added where the hagiographer signs his work by name and implores the saint to intercede for him with God, as the saint's namesake. The closing sentence amounts to no more than the proverb that to "do one's best is what pleases God", again a borrowing from the concluding lines of the funeral orations on Basil and Caesarius (*Or.* 43.82.6 and *Or.* 7.17.2). Clearly, it was the hagiographer's decision to restrict his literary debts to his hero's work.

To paraphrase T.S. Eliot in "East Coker", Gregory the Presbyter worked by some strength and much submission. On the one hand, fully conscious of the fact that hagiography can hardly admit the sentimental excesses of a self-centred personality, he made the necessary adjustments. Hagiography required that the portrait of a holy figure such as Gregory be cleansed of the exaggerations of his own autohagiography. On the other hand, the hagiographer showed ample respect to one who was regarded as a model of rhetoric and style, by relying totally upon his work. Gregory the Presbyter was indeed a builder who, nonetheless, did not content himself with quarrying blocks of stones, but also took delight in collecting the pebbles drawn

[33] It has been calculated that approximately 50% of St Gregory's orations were composed at Constantinople and that the major part of his autobiographical writings is devoted to that city; see Gallay 1943: *La vie de saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, 136-137; Elm 1999, 20 n. 63.

[34] Van Dam 2003, 174.

from a deep acquaintance with the style, vocabulary and literary technique of his honoree.

Ihor Ševčenko has defined the style of the *Life* as pleasant and clear, thus standing in sharp contrast to Theodore Metochites' *Logos*.[35] Although Gregory the Presbyter's text is by no means devoid of classical allusions, one of the demands of "high-style" prose, it can fairly be classified in the "middle-style" category.[36] For the educated Byzantine it would not have posed difficulties of the kind ninth-century hagiography in high style or Metochites' *Logos* would have done. The account of events is linear, rational and modest, devoid of any excessive rhetorical or hagiographical embellishments. In commending a sophisticated author whose verbal echoes can be traced in almost any learned Byzantine text, his hagiographer chose the less extravagant aspects of his language and style. A few years before Lequeux presented his detailed list of the Presbyter's borrowings from the *Corpus Nazianzenum*, Ševčenko had maintained that the author followed *De vita sua* regarding his choice of words.[37] Lequeux's inquiry, as well as the examination attempted here, demonstrate that this observation is only partly true: Gregory the Presbyter exploits a wide range of texts and not merely his namesake's autobiographical poem. By the same token, his choice of words extends far beyond the works that have been identified as his primary source material.

Indeed, a random gleaning of rare words and expressions that recur in Gregory's works can show how comprehensive his biographer's dependence was on the *Corpus Nazianzenum* and, what is more, how free their use sometimes was, once removed from their precise context. A few examples will illustrate both points. In the critical moment of an imminent shipwreck, Gregory tore off his clothing, thereby filling his fellow navigators with awe (§3.19). The expression used, *tên esthêta perirrhêxamenos*, occurs only in *Or.* 5 *Contra Iulianum*, and then in relation to Ezechias, king of Judah, who bore witness to God for Senachereim's blasphemy. Seeking quietude, both Gregory and Basil found themselves in Pontus where they increased their virtue by mutual incitement (§6.10), *tên te aretên têi*

[35] Ševčenko 1996, 225.

[36] See Lequeux 2001, 20. The most "impressive" and "original" (i.e. not drawn from the *Corpus Nazianzenum*) classical citation is without doubt that from Plato's *Laws* in §4.76-78 (cf. Lequeux 2001, 218-220).

[37] Ševčenko 1996, 225; a similar view is expressed by Van Dam 2003a, 185: "Gregory the Priest's biography was essentially a prose version of Gregory's autobiographical poems".

parathêxei sunauxontes. Unlike the previous example, the Presbyter in this case borrowed the same wording from related texts: *Or.* 43.20.16-17 (*allêlois tên aretên parathêgontes*) and *Ep.* 6.4 addressed to Basil. In another letter, destined for Eulalios (*Ep.* 116.1), we pick up the sole attestation of the expression *philosophias eggumnastêrion* which is employed in §10.29 of the vita, in order to denote the shelter where the saint practised ascetic isolation away from the troubles he experienced at Sasima. In the same vein, Gregory the Presbyter uses the compound and rare verb *sumparekteinesthai*, meaning here "stretch out, extend", which is attested three times, again in different contexts and senses.[38]

Apart from these lexicographical borrowings or rather allusions, which suggest that either the whole *Corpus* or a *Lexicon Nazianzenum* lay on his desk,[39] the hagiographer was equally fluent in imitating other aspects of the saint's writing style. There are proverbs or proverbial statements scattered and intercalated throughout the narrative[40] as well as comparisons with philosophical figures, all of whom are repeatedly cited in the *Corpus Nazianzenum*. To be sure, Gregory the Presbyter was well-read in the work of his namesake and had an eye for detail.

The question might now be raised regarding the audience for whom Gregory the Presbyter was writing. Michael Psellos considered a major strength of Gregory of Nazianzus to be his ability to vary his style according to the occasion.[41] A perspicacious analysis of the poetics of his oration for Basil has shown that three levels of style (plain, middle and grand) intermingle and alternate in order to produce different emotional effects.[42]

As already noted, this was not the case with his biographer, who, for once, did not follow his model closely, but wrote in a single plain style that would assure him a wide reception. Nevertheless, like many Byzantine

[38] For all these parallels see the table in the appendix to the present chapter.

[39] The oldest *Lexicon* of St Gregory's *Orations* is included in codex *Baroccianus* 50, dating from the first half of the tenth cent.; on the whole question, see Kalamakis 1992: *Λεξικὰ τῶν ἐπῶν Γρηγορίου τοῦ Θεολόγου μετὰ γενικῆς θεωρήσεως τῆς πατερικῆς λεξικογραφίας*, 57ff.

[40] See e.g. §4.19-21 (on youth), §8.40-41 (on envy), §11.39-40 (on the good's emulation), §13.15 (a drop which falls without ceasing can hollow a stone), §16.42-46 (on rhetoric and philosophy).

[41] See Mayer 1911, 57-58; and Wilson 1983, 171.

[42] See Milovanovic-Barham 1994: "Three Levels of Style in Gregory of Nazianzus: The Case of *Oration 43*", *Classica et Mediaevalia* 45, 193-210.

texts, Gregory the Presbyter's edifice can be looked at from two angles: either as a simple and straightforward construction, or as a delicately structured ensemble. On the one hand, those desiring to read a biography that followed the course of an eventful life would be amply satisfied, while, on the other, those seeking greater sophistication would have been well-read in St Gregory's work and therefore able to detect verbal or stylistic allusions.

Be that as it may, judging from the absence of demons and miracles, the relatively sparse interest in theological excursuses and, above all, the author's effort to highlight Gregory's involvement in social affairs at the expense of his strong ascetic inclinations, the text was undoubtedly aimed at a lay and secular, that is a non-monastic audience. In other words, the ideal of sanctity propounded by Gregory of Nazianzus in his autobiographical works was largely adapted by his hagiographer to satisfy more mundane considerations. Besides, what was to become the authorized biography of the Nazianzen father was a vita commissioned not by an abbot, but by a bishop, the hagiographer's father. Unlike the Lives of bishops composed in centuries earlier than the sixth, which were intended for private study rather than public recitation, it was a text to be read out before a lay audience.[43] It is legitimate to infer that this audience, already denoted in the preamble by the use of the expression "*ô hiera panêguris*" (§1.38-39), was none other than the Christian flock of Caesarea, the hometown of Gregory the Presbyter. Indeed, there are instances where the hagiographer underscores the particular ties between Gregory and Basil, but, again, without exaggeration.[44]

In his discussion of ninth- and tenth-century "secular biography at Byzantium", Paul Alexander noted a tendency in the hagiography of that period to assume an increasingly secular guise, thereby "contributing" to the revival of a type of literature that had suffered a slow and lingering death during the preceding Christian age.[45] The biography of Gregory shares many common traits with other examples of "semi-secular hagiography", such as the *Life of the Patriarch Nikephoros* or the vita of the Patriarch Ignatios; yet it is a text that is difficult to classify and, in a sense, an

[43] On this and other interesting points, see the discussion in van Uytfanghe 2001: "L'hagiographie antique tardive: une littérature populaire?", *Antiquité tardive* 9, 201-218.

[44] See §§5.1-10, 9.27-32, 10.14-16, 11.49-54, 12.24-30, 22.3-6.

[45] Alexander 1940: "Secular Biography at Byzantium", *Speculum* 15, 208.

exceptional text, if we are to retain its dating to the sixth century, an age when monastic hagiography was at its creative peak.

All things considered, given that his hero's holiness did not require him to establish any particular credentials, but rather provide a temperate reconfirmation of the apologetic points in his fully-fledged and other fragmented autobiographical works, the hagiographer laid due, but not exaggerated, emphasis on the image of a martyr for the faith. Moreover, the fact that his account was not politically or historically oriented, that is polemical, was an additional reason for its success.

Indeed, there can be little doubt that the vita by Gregory the Presbyter enjoyed a glorious posterity. It was copied in what was to become the famous deluxe manuscript *Parisinus gr.* 510, dating from between 879 and 882 and designed for the emperor Basil I and his family. The text itself also directly inspired a few biographical miniatures, namely those representing highlights from the saint's life.[46] In addition to these, the illuminator of another manuscript, *Parisinus gr.* 533, depicted Gregory's biographer delivering an account of the saint's life to the people.[47] As the vita enjoyed great authority and responded to his literary requirements, it was among the few texts left untouched by Symeon Metaphrastes and included without alteration in the Menologion that bears his name.

Despite the authority that the text of Gregory the Presbyter enjoyed, middle and late Byzantium saw a number of scholars of the highest reputation engaged in the composition of long polished pieces on the Theologian that mingled hagiography with rhetoric.[48] For exceptional holy figures such as Gregory a single biography, whatever authority it may have gained over the centuries, could not satisfy the taste of an ever developing society or at least its higher strata, be they intellectuals outside or inside the imperial court. Appropriating each time a specific language, these scholars treated the saint's biographical material in a different and sometimes inspiring

[46] The latest study devoted to this MS is Brubaker 1999: *Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium: Image as Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus.*

[47] For this manuscript, see Galavaris 1969: *The Illustrations of the Liturgical Homilies of Gregory Nazianzenus*, 236-239; the miniature with Gregory the Presbyter in the left margin appears on fol. 276v, see ibid., Fig. 255; and Walter 1978: "Biographical Scenes from the Three Hierarchs", *Revue des Études Byzantines* 36, 235ff.

[48] I intend to deal with these authors and texts in a subsequent paper.

manner.[49] The literary reception in Byzantium of the author who was regarded as the Christian model of rhetoric could never have been uniform and monolithic.

Appendix: Parallels

	Vita by Gregory the Presbyter	Corpus Nazianzenum
1	Τήν ἐσθῆτα περιρρηξάμενος καταπλήσσει βοαῖς τε καὶ ὀδυρμοῖς τοὺς συμπλέοντας, ὡς πάντας τοῦ καθ᾽ ἑαυτοὺς ἀλογήσαντας τὸν τούτου θρῆνον συνεργάζεσθαι... (§3.19-21)	Ἐζεκίας ... τὴν ἐσθῆτα περιρρηξάμενος δακρύων τε προχέων πηγὰς καὶ τὰς χεῖρας εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀνατείνας, τὸν Θεὸν τῆς Σεναχειρὴμ βλασφημίας ἐπιμαρτύρεται... *Or.* 5.26.6-9.
2	Διέτριβον οὖν τήν τε ἀρετὴν τῇ παραθήξει συναύξοντες... (§6.9-10)	Τίς ἅμιλλαν ἀρετῆς καὶ παράθηξιν, ἣν ὅροις γραπτοῖς καὶ κανόσιν ἠσφαλισάμεθα... *Ep.* 6.4 (Βασιλείῳ)
3	... εἰς φροντιστήριον ἀσθενῶν καταφεύγει... καὶ φιλοσοφίας τῶν καιρῶν ἐγγυμναστήριον τίθεται... (§10.26-29)	Γέγονε καὶ ἡ Λαμὶς ἐμοὶ τῆς σιωπῆς χωρίον καὶ φιλοσοφίας ἐγγυμναστήριον... *Ep.* 116.1 (Γρηγορίῳ)
4	τῇ σωστάσει τοῦ κόσμου συμπαρεκτείνεσθαι... (§11.10-11)	a) μὴ συμπαρεκτείνου, πένης ὤν, πλουσίῳ... *Or.* 32.21.22. b) τοῦτο τοῖς ἀϊδίοις αἰών, τὸ συμπαρεκτεινόμενον τοῖς οὖσιν οἷόν τι χρονικὸν κίνημα καὶ διάστημα... *Or.* 38.8.9-11 and *Or.* 45.4, *PG* 36, col. 628c.

[49] Different again is the view of Van Dam 2003a, 185: "Later biographers could make up little about Gregory that he had not already made up about himself".

13

Theosis according to Gregory

Torstein Theodor Tollefsen

What is the meaning of life? I have a small book, written by archimandrite Christophoros Stavropoulos, where it is said that we live on earth because we are destined to live in heaven. The purpose of our existence is to become *deified*, to enter into union with God.[1] As is well known, this is a central message of modern Orthodox theology, and much has been written about it. It seems that the idea of salvation as deification (θέωσις) has caught the imagination of Christians of other traditions as well. In Finland, Lutheran theologians engaged in ecumenical discussion with the Russian Orthodox Church have searched the writings of Martin Luther in an attempt to detect a similar doctrine there.[2]

The modern Orthodox doctrine of deification has a long history and includes episodes of controversy, not over the doctrine as such, but over the conditions of achieving the promised communion with the divine nature, as in the Palamitic controversy over divine "energies".[3] The roots of the idea of deification are found in the theology of the great Fathers of late antiquity, or, from an Orthodox point of view, in the texts from the Bible that lies behind the interpretations of these theologians.

St Basil, in his *De spiritu sancto* (9.23), speaks of human beings "becoming like God, and, the highest of all desires, becoming God" (ἡ πρός

[1] The book is in Norwegian, *Deltakere i guddommelig natur* by Christoforos Stavropoulos, and published by the Hl Trifon Ortodokse Forlag, Oslo. No information is given about where and when the original was published.

[2] A positive evaluation of the findings of the Finnish theologians is given by Norris 1996: "Deification: Consensual and Cogent", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 49, 411-428. On the other hand, some critical remarks are found in Hallonsten 2002: "Justification and Theosis (deification) ", 256.

[3] I believe "Palamism" is philosophically sound and can be defended. At present I am working on a manuscript for a book, *Generation, Creation, Transformation – A Study in the Doctrine of Divine Energeia.* I investigate theories of essence and *energeia* in Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor and Gregory Palamas within their own contexts and on the background of similar doctrines in non-Christian philosophy (Aristotle, Plotinus).

θεὸν ὁμοίωσις, τὸ ἀκρότατον τῶν ὀρεκτῶν, θεὸν γενέσθαι). We find similar beliefs in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, the Theologian. In this paper I will try to make out how Gregory the Theologian, Basil's friend, understood the ontological contents of θέωσις or deification.[4] Gregory's writings abound in terminology related to deification. I should like to understand as precisely as possible what he means when he says that human beings shall become God or be deified, and see if it is possible to delineate the ontology of deified humanity according to Gregory.

The language of deification is daring. It says that human beings will literally become God. "To become God" – this sounds unfamiliar to the ears of what one often calls "western" Christians, especially when it is presented in the shape of a Christian doctrine of salvation.[5] To the members of the Orthodox churches, on the other hand, the terminology of deification is familiar. One might object that nowhere in the scriptures does one find this terminology of deification. However, I am not so sure that this necessarily means that there is no notion of *theôsis* in scripture. And are the scriptures really so empty of suggestive terminology? The verse in 2 Peter (1.4), mentioning participation in the divine nature, is well known. But there is more. We have 1 John (3.2): "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him (ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα), for we shall see him as he is." – A member of the Church, believing Christ to be the Incarnated One, would naturally think, upon hearing these words, that they spoke of achieving likeness with God at a certain stage. Likewise, when Paul, in Philippians (3.21), says that Christ, "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body (σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ), by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself", it would be understood in the sense that our bodily being would be transformed into likeness with the bodily being of the Incarnated God. And Christians, upon reading in Psalm 82 (verse 6) "I say, 'You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you", (cf. John 10.33ff.) would one day come to link these

[4] On Gregory's soteriology, see Winslow 1979: *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus*. I have benefited from Winslow's study, even if I have some critical remarks, as will become apparent.

[5] In Fitzgerald (ed.) 1999: *Augustine through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, there is an article on deification which shows that Augustine could think of salvation in this way. Norris 1996 tries to make the deification-motif accessible and available to modern Protestant Christians.

words with texts from the New Testament such as those mentioned above, and the emergence of a deification terminology would only be a matter of time. One could, of course, contest the kind of exegesis that finds a doctrine of deification in such texts. But if the great theologians of late antiquity found such a doctrine in the scriptures, and it was widely accepted, I cannot see how they can be wrong at the beginning of the third Millennium![6]

"To become God." In what sense is this to be understood? Will man enter the sphere of divinity and merge with the divine essence, be transformed into the same kind of being as the transcendent Godhead? There are texts in which Gregory speaks of Christ in terms of mingling, but whatever that may mean, there are reasons to believe that he does not think in terms of complete essential transformation of humanity into deity. It seems that as early as in the fourth century the idea of the integrality of nature is basic to Christian thought.[7] So, if this is not what is intended, whatever does it mean to become God? Is the idea of becoming God no more than an *image* used to characterize an extraordinary kind of being in a state of blessedness, not to be taken literally? "An image": when we say that something is an image, we often tend to reduce its importance, especially when what is considered to be an image makes a strong impression. In what sense could the idea of deification be intended as an image? Is it a metaphor? But if it is a metaphor, it would be wrong to speak of it as "no more than that". If metaphor is taken in its original sense of transference from one sphere to another, to speak of deification could suggest a kind of extraordinary existence beyond our grasp, because its mode is divine and the divine as such is beyond human comprehension. Even if it is not possible to *comprehend* such an existence, maybe certain ontological distinctions may nevertheless be applied in order to *indicate* what it may be about. What I am searching for are certain pointers that distinguish the state of deification according to Gregory.

What kind of being is man? In his panegyric on his brother Caesarius, Gregory asks:

[6] Norris 1996 gives interesting interpretations of more New Testament texts in order to defend the idea of deification as one aspect of salvation.

[7] "Integrality of nature" – what I have in mind is the idea that increate nature and created natures (in their specific manifold) are preserved inviolate by their divine principles. Natures do not change into one another. At a much later stage this idea is worked out in an explicit philosophical way by Maximus the Confessor.

> How long shall we be left to mourn his departure? Are we not hastening to the same abode? Shall we not shortly be reduced to the same dust? And what in these short days will be our gain, save that after it has been ours to see, or suffer, or perchance even to do, more ill, we must discharge the common and inexorable tribute to the law of nature, by following some, preceding others, to the tomb, mourning these, being lamented by those, and receiving from some that meed of tears which we ourselves had paid to others?
>
> Such my brethren, is our existence, who live this transient life, such our pastime upon earth: we come into existence out of non-existence, and after existing we are dissolved. We are unsubstantial dreams, impalpable visions, like the flight of a passing bird, like ship leaving no track upon the sea, a speck of dust, a vapour, an early dew, a flower that quickly blooms, and quickly fades. (*Or.* 7.18-19, quoted from NPNF 7)[8]

One does not have to stand by the grave of someone dear to sense the human emotion that motivates these poetic words. And is this really all there is to life? No, not at all! In his second theological oration Gregory says that no man can discover what God is in essence and nature, but maybe it will be discovered

> when that within us which is godlike and divine (τὸ θεοειδὲς ... καὶ θεῖον), I mean our mind and reason, shall have mingled with its Like, and the image shall have ascended to the Archetype, of which it has now the desire. (*Or.* 28.17, quoted from NPNF 7)

To be created in the image of God means, according to this text, that the human mind and reason (νοῦς and λόγος) are *godlike* and *divine*. From a modern perspective this might sound strange: is man made as some kind of divine being? Is he divine by nature – if "divine" means what belongs to the nature of the divinity? But this is *not* Gregory's thought. What he most likely has in mind is that man is the most precious thing God created. There is, in short, something in man that could be said to present a similarity with God: man has an intellectual nature and God is perfect Mind. This could also be interpreted as saying something about the *possibility* of deification: there is something godlike and divine in man, because the purpose of his existence is to attain deification. Man is *not* a flower fading away, a ship leaving no trace upon the sea. According to Gregory, there is a

[8] Translations of Gregory of Nazianzus are mostly taken from the NPNF, Second Series, Vol. 7, occasionally modified by myself.

definite purpose set out before him, not merely to return to dust; through his training here he is destined, soul and body, to participate in divine glory. He lives because his purpose is to be in communion with God. In Gregory's view he lives in order to become deified.

Gregory's idea of deification is, at least to some degree, shaped within the polemical situations in which he found himself. There are two Christological problems that he tries to address, both posed in confrontation with contemporary theologies that Gregory held to be heretical. On the one hand we have the Neo-Arian doctrine, on the other Apollinarianism. Gregory's basic motives seem in both cases to be soteriological. We should be careful, however, not to overstate the issue. Winslow states in the preface to his study of Gregory's doctrine of salvation:

> It soon became apparent that, with few exceptions, the major arguments and formulations concerning the doctrine of the Trinity and the Person of Christ rested directly upon a variety of soteriological principles.[9]

It may seem, in short, as if Gregory's preference for salvation as deification *requires* a divine Saviour and a triune God of a particular character. It is obviously very tempting to reason this way. One could, for instance, avoid the challenge of giving direct answers to questions concerning the reasonableness of the Cappadocian doctrine of the Trinity. One could just say that this must be understood from the point of view of humans' hope of salvation. To take the argument to its logical conclusion: the doctrine of the divine Saviour and the Holy Trinity are *constructions* springing from the hope of salvation as deification. I believe Winslow is incorrect. The situation is more complex and does not warrant such a judgement. Whatever one might think of of the Cappadocian doctrine of the Incarnation and the Trinity, these Fathers thought of themselves as defending Tradition. They recognized correctly that the Church had received its notion of a triune God and the trinitarian formula (for instance of baptism) from the past. There is, of course, a logical connection between the kind of soteriology Gregory accepts and the kind of theology he considers orthodox. This soteriology cannot stand without a corresponding theology, but that does not mean that he did not conceive the theological motif first. To suggest that the doctrine of the Trinity springs from the motif of human longing for deification and the need for a certain soteriology, is to mistake a logical connection for a chronological or even causal connection. Gregory could

[9] Winslow 1979, v, 130.

well have said: "I believe Christ and the Holy Spirit to be God, and I also believe that humanity is destined to deification." Had someone replied that the Son and the Holy Spirit are not God, Gregory would have replied, as he in fact does: then deification is impossible![10]

Against the Neo-Arians Gregory stresses that Christ and the Spirit are divine hypostases in the same sense as the Father is. *If not*, they could not deify human beings. Against the Apollinarians he argues that Christ assumed a complete humanity. The humanity of Christ must be complete since *otherwise* there would be a part of human nature that cannot be healed, namely the mind, νοῦς, and consequently be beyond the possibility of becoming deified. Both these arguments require some comments.

I think it is reasonable to claim that the deification of human beings requires Christ and the Holy Spirit to be persons of divine character and authority in order that the human hope of salvation may be fulfilled. How could they be trusted as agents of salvation if their authority was solely of a created kind? To turn this argument from a logical connection into an argument for the subsequent shaping of doctrine is, however, misguided. It would be to misunderstand Gregory's rhetoric. His point is the appeal to the conscience of his opponents: if you have this hope in Christ, then consider who he must be. If the opponents did not share in the doctrines, however, the argument would be powerless: "We do not share the Cappadocian doctrine of salvation, therefore there is no need for an eternal and divine Christ or Holy Spirit." Alternatively: "We do not believe the Son and the Holy Spirit to be God, so there can be no real deification." – As far as I know, there are no arguments in any extant Neo-Arian text that critizise the Cappadocians from the point of view of soteriology. Thus it does not seem that the addressees of Gregory's arguments had believed in the faintest that the theology of the Cappadocians rested on their soteriology.

What, now, of the anti-Apollinarian argument? The humanity of Christ must be complete with a human mind, or else some part of man could not be healed. This points to a way of thinking about salvation that understands the Saviour more as a healer than as a judge who absolves us. It therefore indicates a view of grace more as a power of regeneration than a quality of the divine mind that acquits by investing us with a cloak of external righteousness. It points to grace as a cooperating force in man's life. The whole of Letter 101, which concerns the Apollinarian controversy, suggests this.

[10] Cf. *Or.* 39.17 and 40.42.

There is, however, a problem connected with this argument. Somehow there seems to be at work the idea, deeply rooted in Cappadocian thought, of humanity as basically *one* thing, one essence or nature. Let us consider some texts. In *Or.* 38.13 we read:

> And he who gives riches becomes poor, for he assumes the poverty of my flesh, that I may assume the richness of his Godhead.

There is the same logic behind what he says in Letter 101 against the Apollinarians:

> For that which he has not assumed he has not healed; but that which is united to his Godhead is also saved.
>
> But, someone might say, the Godhead took the place of the human intellect. How does this touch me? For Godhead joined to flesh alone is not man, nor to soul alone, nor to both apart from intellect, which is the most essential part of man. Keep then the whole man, and mingle Godhead therewith, that you may benefit me in my completeness.[11]

In *Or.* 29.19 Gregory says that Christ's humanity became God in order that I too might be made God to the extent that he became man. – All these texts seem to revolve around the same basic idea: human nature is basically one thing. The first text speaks of "my flesh", while in the following two there is a connection between the healing of Christ's humanity and the healing of my own, just as if there were an ontological connection between what was in Christ and in me. How should this be understood?

I think it would be somewhat far-fetched to burden the Cappadocians with any developed theory of realism. There are texts, though, in which both Basil and Gregory of Nyssa speak of nature and essence as universal, and this universal nature is made into a hypostasis by the addition of properties.[12] Of course, the problem of the universal and the particular was already an issue in philosophy from Plato and Aristotle to Neoplatonism. Even though the Cappadocians were realists in more than one sense, I believe that the main line of their thought in connection with the present

[11] *PG* 37, 181c-184a, 184b.

[12] Cf. Gregory, *Ad Petrum* (in Deferrari 1926-1934: Saint Basil, *The Letters* I-IV, Vol. I) and *Ad Graecos*, GNO III.1, ed. Mueller 1958. *Ad Petrum* was held to be the 38th letter of Basil, but is now considered by some to be by Gregory, cf. Turcescu 1997: "The Concept of Divine Persons in Gregory of Nyssa's 'To His Brother Peter' [...]", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 42, 63-82. For Basil, cf. *Letter* 236 in Deferrari 1926-1934, Vol. III, 402-403.

topic is different.[13] In his *De hominis opificio* Gregory of Nyssa says that the whole fullness of humanity (τὸ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος πλήρωμα) was created in Adam, the first human individual.[14] According to Gregory of Nyssa this means that God knew all men, from the first to the last, in his creation of this first individual. All subsequent generations are, consequently, potentially present in Adam, and human nature is bequeathed to all posterior human beings who, in particular circumstances, are individualized through additional characteristics. This idea, it strikes me, does not subscribe to any specific theory of realism, but is philosophically quite open.

I would say Gregory the Theologian could be understood along similar lines. There is a need for some generic connection, at least, or communion between all human beings for the fall of Adam and Eve to have any effect on all subsequent generations. The first sin, therefore, must be of special consequence. The divine act of salvation is also of special consequence, since it is an act of the Logos performed through his own humanity. He is the one who eternally had the idea of man as his own pattern for creation.[15] In him, therefore, "what it is to be human" would reasonably be present in the complete sense, leaving aside the problems of the individuation of the humanity of Christ. So, in the present age, the fate of human beings is determined by what is achieved through two agents, the first and the second Adam.

"He assumes the poverty of my flesh" (*Or.* 38.13). The assumed flesh is mine, if it is ordinary human flesh, and with regard to kind (species) it is *identical* with my humanity which ultimately descends from Adam. That being the case, human beings have a natural interconnectedness in the ontological sense. The nature and natural order of all things is found in the divine *logos*. This *logos* is implanted in all creatures and points the way to God (*Or.* 28.16). When the God who conceived this pattern becomes incarnate in accordance with its essential contents, his humanity is the same as ours. He assumes *my* flesh, then.

How is Christ's salvific work made effective in human beings? It would seem that we are directed to his body, the Church, and its mysteries (sacraments) as an answer to this question. Baptism is a "birth". According to

[13] I have to admit that I have not finished pondering this matter. I have also put things differently in other connections. It is not easy to determine the exact shape of Cappadocian logic and ontology.

[14] Cf. *De hominis opificio* 16.15-18; *PG* 44.185a ff.

[15] Cf. *Or.* 28.16.

Gregory there are three births, the natural one, baptism and the resurrection (*Or.* 40.2). The birth of baptism has two aspects, related to the two aspects of man, i.e. his visible and invisible being (*Or.* 40.8). These two aspects of baptism are an outward and an inward cleansing, he says. The first he describes as "typical", and I am not quite sure what he means by this. Possibly, the external washing could be seen as an image of being cleansed or even of a purifying death or burial. – The latter might make good sense. We shall look a little further into this.

In connection with the mystery of baptism certain ideas seem to come together in the mind of Gregory. Let us look at his first oration on the Pascha:

> Yesterday the Lamb was slain and the door-posts anointed … . Today we have clean escaped from Egypt and from Pharaoh; and there is none to hinder us from keeping a Feast to the Lord our God – the Feast of our departure … (*Or.* 1.3)

– Yesterday and today! It is a feature of certain orations on liturgical feasts that Gregory speaks as if there were a kind of presence with the historical event that is being celebrated.[16] This seems to be more than a consciousness of the relevance of a salvific message, it is an awareness or an experience of the ever-present effectiveness of Christ's saving acts. I call this the *liturgical experience of contemporaneity*.[17] The personal relevance is expressed shortly after the passage quoted above:

> Yesterday I was crucified with him; today I am glorified with him; yesterday I died with him; today I am quickened with him; yesterday I was buried with him; today I rise with him.

The believer is identified with Christ in his savings acts, and in this identification he is introduced into the blessings of the new life. St Gregory speaks of him who rose today and who may renew me by his Spirit, and "clothing me with the new Man, may give me to his New Creation" (*Or.* 1.2). It seems to me that identification and actualization should be understood mystically or sacramentally. It is at least tempting to make a connec-

[16] See also *Or.* 38 and 45.

[17] This liturgical experience is still a fact in the celebration of the major feasts in Orthodox practice. Several beautiful hymns used in the services give expression to the phenomenon through the repeated "today".

tion between the festal celebration of the resurrection and the mystery of baptism, when Gregory declares in his oration on baptism:

> And this which comes to the aid of our first birth, makes us new instead of old, and like God instead of what we are now; recasting us without fire, and creating us anew without breaking us up. (*Or.* 40.8)

In his first oration on the Pascha Gregory exhorts his listeners to offer themselves to God, to "give back to the image what was made after the image". This admonition culminates in the following words: "Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become gods for his sake, since he for us became man" (*Or.* 1.4 and 5).[18] – Now, to connect the "typical" aspect of baptism with the Paschal mystery, its experience and its effectiveness, makes good sense. Whatever Gregory may have had in mind with the term typical, the ideas I have just developed make good sense anyway. From the festal celebration we are led into the mystery of baptism. The feast and the rite make us one with the Saviour, re-create us for a new life and new creation, in short set us on the road of deification.

Let us turn to the second aspect of baptism as developed in *Or.* 40.8. The second aspect is *real*, Gregory says, being a spiritual "washing", that makes us new, that is *like* God, and recreates us. It is important for our understanding of Gregory's idea of deification that it necessitates both the full divinity and the full humanity of Christ. Gregory's deep concern for the human hope of salvation is bound up with the need of the Saviour to be a person of outstanding authority. If deification is the issue, he could be no other than the *incarnated Godhead*, with equal emphasis on both parts of that term. A quotation from the oration on baptism shows this: "[...] if I yet worshipped a creature, or were baptized into a creature, I should not be made divine (οὐκ ἂν ἐθεούμην), nor have changed my first birth" (40.42, cf. *Or.* 41.9). One might also recall what Gregory says in *Or.* 39.17: "And how is he not God, if I may digress a little, by whom you too are made God." – Baptism seems to actualize the saving acts of God in the recipient, but it is also a gift to be cultivated in the recipient's life (cf. *Or.* 40.31). Baptism received in faith brings man onto the path of life, while the spiritual gifts received in baptism lead him on through a spiritual development towards the blessed life for which man is destined.

Often when Gregory speaks of deification, he has the Incarnated One in mind. The flesh assumed by Christ should be called God:

[18] It is puzzling that the NPNF translates θεοί as "God's" and not "gods".

> What he was he laid aside; what he was not he assumed; not that he became two, but he deigned to become one from of two. For both are God, that which assumed, and that which was assumed; two natures coming together in one, not two Sons (let no one give a false account of the blending). (*Or.* 37.2)

God the Logos or Son became a human being in order to save lost humanity:

> He came forth then as God with that which he had assumed, one from two contraries, which are flesh and Spirit, the one has deified, the other has been deified.
>
> And he who gives riches becomes poor, for he assumes the poverty of my flesh, that I may assume the richness of his Godhead. (38.13)

Christ's assumed humanity became deified, and this deification is the source of deification for all human beings: "He makes me God by the power of his Incarnation" (30.14). By involvement with God (θεῷ πλακῆναι) man shall be made God by the mingling (ἐκ τῆς μίξεως) (*Or.* 30.3). I may partake of what belongs to him by the blending (κἀγὼ μεταλάβω τῶν ἐκείνου διὰ τὴν σύγκρασιν) (*Or.* 30.6, cf. 38.13). This is the language of participation; how is it to be understood? God is not a material substance, so there is no possibility of conceiving it as dividing and sharing. How, then? This is difficult to answer, but we could conceive of it as a communion of two spiritual realities moving towards one another and coming together in intimate relationship. However, there is more involved, namely the human body, and it is not just an external coming together. There is a transformation taking place, as with the humanity of Christ at mount Tabor: "And on the mountain He shines forth, becoming more luminous than the sun, initiating us into the mystery of the future" (*Or.* 29.19). This "mystery of the future" must point to the promise of deification as an actualized fact in human beings. There seems to be spheres of being penetrating into one another, or, at least, that the divine penetrate into the human.[19]

One of the most striking expressions of the doctrine of deification comes in the third *Theological Oration*:

[19] Norris 1996, 417 and 428 makes use of the distinction between God's essence and energies, i.e. of the "Palamitic" distinction, to explain how deification is possible: we may participate in the energies, not in the essence. Basically I agree that this is how the deification-doctrine must eventually be understood. I am not sure, however, how far such an insight was developed by all the Cappadocians.

> Man and God blended; they became a single whole, the stronger part predominating, in order that I might be made God to the same extent that he was made man (ἵνα γένωμαι τοσοῦτον θεός, ὅσον ἐκεῖνος ἄνθρωπος). (*Or.* 29.19)[20]

How are we to understand, however, the proportions in which this will occur? When God and man became a "single whole" or "one" (εἷς), as the Greek text has it, the stronger, i.e. the divine part, predominated, Gregory says. Even if we are to expect a mutual interpenetration (there was in fact a *blending*), the active part of the union is God. The divinity did not abdicate any of its richness or modify its properties, but rather transformed the humanity into something new. The divine character is preserved. The human is transformed. However, if it is to be taken literally that man will be made God to the degree that God was made man, one would think that since the being of the Godhead is preserved in the Incarnation, the human being is likewise preserved in deification. We may conclude then that man, according to Gregory, will not loose his character of being a *creature* of a specific kind when he is deified. On the other hand, Gregory seems to think that despite the fact that a human being must cooperate with God on his way to salvation, human nature is not the predominant party in the process. Human nature is passive and receives from God the ability to be God. The natures are preserved in Gregory's understanding of the degrees of active participation, when God becomes humanized and man becomes deified. The being of the Logos is intimately linked to his assumed humanity, yes, to the degree that humanity is understood as God's humanity participating in the worship of the one Christ. Conversely, in the case of humans, the being of a human hypostasis assumes divinity, so that this human agent (a particular human individual) exists in the mode of divine nature. He becomes a God.

What then does it mean for human beings to become God? What are the positive results for the being of man as deified? There do not seem to be any extended speculations on this in St Gregory the Theologian. He points out that under present conditions it is impossible to discover the nature and essence of the divine. But when the godlike (τὸ θεοειδές) within us (*logos* and *nous*) has been mingled with its kin, the image-character of man

[20] The Wickham & Williams translation, in: Norris 1991: *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*, 257f. The question of proportionality in this quotation made a deep impression on St Maximus the Confessor, who developed the idea further, cf. *Ambigua* 7, *PG* 91.1084b-d.

will be regained from its archetype.[21] Then it will be possible to discover what God is, Gregory asserts. It is clear to me that behind these words lie the words of John: "...we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is". Gregory does not say, however, to what degree we will know the essence of God, but even if the degree is not specified, we could say that one aspect of deification is to know God intimately, beyond the knowledge in part, mentioned by Paul (1 Corinthians 13.12).

Gregory takes pleasure in expanding on his pattern of proportionality (*Or.* 38.13): Christ assumed the poverty of my flesh that I may receive the richness of his divinity. Christ empties himself that I might share in his fullness. This suggests that becoming divine means entering into communion with the divinity, and achieving properties that belong to God. Human beings begin to exist in a divine mode, the mode of divine properties, such as immortality. One wonders, however, how far this goes. – Man will be God in so far as God became man. – But God did not change his essence into a creaturely nature. God did not become man by transforming divinity into manhood. The converse, then, must also be true: man will *not* be God in the sense of his essence being transformed into a divine essence.

I believe there are clear indications of there being a limit to the process of transformation of human beings into divinity. First we have the obvious theological reason: the Christian concept of Godhead is that of a well-structured and complete triadic being. It cannot be added to or be subtracted from. This is quite different from the case with humans. It does not matter for our concept of man or our understanding of humanity, whether there are fewer or more human beings living in the world. At this point one could really speak of a "Cappadocian" concept of divinity. It is also apparent in Gregory of Nyssa's *Ad Graecos*. There could be many human hypostases, but whether the number increases or diminishes does not matter for the concept of humanity. We are used to thinking there are many individual human beings, the exact number does not matter. But when it comes to the Godhead, we could not say there are three gods. And why not? Because *to be God* means *to be the Triad*. The term God is not predicated like the common term human being. God, however, is not a proper name either. It is a predicate containing particular etymological meaning. The most important for the present discussion, though, is that the term God denotes a specific kind of being, the complete and perfect being of the Triad. In short: human beings cannot become God by nature,

[21] *Or.* 27.17. The verb is ἀναλαμβάνω.

which would mean to become hypostatic members of the unoriginate Godhead.

There is another reason why Gregory's doctrine of deification should not be taken in this radical sense, namely that he admits the *terminology of participation*. A doctrine of participation would normally hold that when one thing participates in another, a difference between them is indicated. Participation takes place across a line of division. When things of different hypostasis or different ontological status stand in a relation of participation, one entity, because of its receptivity, receives certain characteristics from the other, but without achieving identity with that other in essence. Even if one were to say there is participation in the *nature* of God, this would not mean that a creature becomes God *by nature*, but that the nature of God is present in the being of the other entity, transforming it into a new mode of being.

If such considerations hold good for Gregory, one might feel tempted to say, "well then, this notion of deification is not so dramatic after all". It seems that Winslow wishes to make talk of deification less shocking.[22] I would be careful, however, *not* to weaken the strong impression made by the language of deification. Man is made in the image and likeness of God. The scriptures promise likeness with Christ. In Gregory's thought, the sphere of transformation into divinity opened up by the Saviour, points beyond the life of corruptible human existence to the blessed condition of the divine mode of being. And the almost shocking impression made by proclaiming the Gospel in this way should be preserved. Gregory is not careless when he does *not* define with exactness the limits of deified human nature in relation to divinity. The Cappadocians never thought that uncreated and created nature could change into one another. But who could set the limits? In our transient and painful existence it is an extraordinary hope that shines through in Gregory's discourse on his dead brother, as if he is contemplating him on the day of resurrection:

> I await the voice of the archangel, the last trumpet, the transformation of the heavens, the transfiguration of the earth, the liberation of the elements, the renovation of the universe. Then I shall see Cæsarius himself, no longer laid upon a bier, no longer the object of mourning and pity, but brilliant, glorious, heavenly, such as in my dreams I have often beheld thee, dearest and most loving of brothers, pictured thus by my desire, if not by the very truth. (*Or.* 7.21)

[22] Winslow 1979, 34.

14

The appeal to the Cappadocian Fathers and Dionysios the Areopagite in the iconoclast controversy

Andrew Louth

It is well known that, as a result of the Iconoclast controversy, there developed in the Byzantine world an explicit theology of the icon or image. The use of images in Christian worship was probably of long standing, but there had been no more than sporadic controversy about the use and veneration of religious images until the seventh century. The rise of Islam in that century and its conquest of the Eastern and Southern provinces of the Byzantine Empire freed non-Orthodox Christians, and other religious groups, especially the Jews, in those territories from the restrictions and threat of persecution they had faced from the Byzantines. This freedom meant that such religious groups could establish themselves, defend their own position and attack that of others. The Jews, in particular, attacked Christians, claiming that their veneration of icons – together with veneration of the cross and the relics of the saints – amounted to idolatry, thus forcing Christians to defend themselves. These seventh-century arguments justifying the cult of icons survive only in fragments in the florilegia drawn up by Christian defenders of icons against Byzantine iconoclasm in the eighth century, though in the case of Leontios of Neapolis these fragments are substantial. It was, however, only in the eighth century, facing an attack on icons by Christian emperors, that a proper theology of the icon developed, and the first thorough-going attempt to provide such a theology was that put forward by John Damascene in his three treatises *Against those who attack the Holy Images*.[1] Such an explicit theology of icons became part of the heritage of Byzantine Christianity that, together with its theology of *theôsis* or deification, gave a distinctive character to the culture of Byzantium. When, from the ninth century onwards, the Slav nations began to

[1] In Kotter (ed.) 1975: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* III. Eng. trans. (sometimes modified) in Louth (ed.) 2003: St John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*.

embrace Christianity in its Byzantine form, it is arguable that icons came to assume even greater significance within their Orthodox culture. For icons, and the liturgical worship of which they formed a part, were – like the practice of prayer, especially in its solitary, or hesychast, form – unaffected by what has been called the "linguistic filter" that linked, and yet separated, the Greek Christianity of Byzantium from the Slavonic Christianity of the Slavs.

In the following, I should like to explore the influence of the Cappadocian fathers on Byzantine aesthetics, in particular their impact on the formation of the iconodule response to Byzantine iconoclasm. I add to the Cappadocians the thinker who wrote under the pseudonym Dionysios the Areopagite, because he was the other supposedly early authority to whom John Damascene appealed in support of his theology of the icon.

Influence in intellectual or cultural history is always a matter of reception: it is not so much a matter of the pressure of ideas on those influenced as the use of thoughts and ideas of earlier thinkers by later thinkers. It is the reception that is active, not the influence. That is why it is often less illuminating to understand the original form of the ideas than it is to understand the concerns and the problems of those who made use of them. This is particularly important in a culture such as that of Byzantium where innovation was automatically identified with error, and new answers to new problems had to be cloaked in the thoughts of earlier writers so as to appear as old and tried answers inherited within the tradition – in our case the tradition of the Church, though the same applied to philosophical, political, and social traditions as well, indeed to any cultural traditions. In theology the importance of the tradition of the fathers had led to the creation of florilegia, bouquets of quotations from the recognized fathers, relating to the topic under discussion, which, from the fifth century, when these florilegia first emerge, to the time of the Damascene himself, had mostly been matters of Christology. The iconodules, and St John in particular, were quick to draw up florilegia themselves, making clear the support on which they could draw. The earliest of such florilegia, at least of those that are extant, are those appended by John Damascene to his treatises against the iconoclasts. These florilegia constitute only part of his appeal to the fathers, but they are the most explicit part, and it is with them that we shall begin.

John drew up two florilegia: one of which is appended to the first and (in a slightly expanded form) the second of his treatises, the other of which is appended to the third. These florilegia, probably independently of the

treatises to which John attached them (the manuscript tradition of the florilegia is quite distinct from the manuscript tradition of the treatises), proved to be an important resource for the whole iconodule response to iconoclasm, lying behind the florilegium drawn up in Rome in the early 770s, and the Synodica, sent by Pope Hadrian I to the Seventh Œcumenical Synod with his legates, which probably formed the basis of the florilegium drawn up by that synod.[2] The first of these florilegia is not a simple florilegium, consisting of a list of authorities, but is rather a continuation of the argument of the treatise, in which patristic texts are introduced and generally commented on, with the conclusion of the treatise coming at the end, after the florilegium. The second florilegium is quite different: it is very much longer, and is presented as an appendix of quotations, after the formal closing of the treatise itself (at III.42), with very little comment.[3] Together with what we can glean from the treatises themselves, this suggests that, whereas the first two treatises were written as immediate responses to the news of imperial iconoclasm – the first sometime after 726, the second after the deposition of Patriarch Germanos in 730 – the third treatise was composed later and represents a more systematic presentation of John's defence of the making and veneration of icons. The first florilegium lists, first, quotations from the fathers, beginning with Dionysios the Areopagite (thought by the Damascene, of course, to be a first-century bishop), then Basil the Great, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Leontios of Neapolis, and finally Severian of Gabala (out of chronological sequence, and perhaps inserted because he, like Leontios, speaks of the veneration of the cross), and followed by quotations from hagiography – the *Lives* of Basil, Chrysostom, Eupraxia, Mary of Egypt, and from the *Spiritual Meadow*.

John's theological sources in the florilegia are, as already mentioned, Dionysios the Areopagite, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. From our point of view it seems that what John finds in these theologians is not exactly direct support for his own understanding of images. That is not surprising: the concerns of the fourth century were not those of the eighth. The most direct support adduced by John comes from a passage from Basil's work *On the Holy Spirit*:

[2] See Alexakis 1996: *Codex Parisinus Graecus 1115 and Its Archetype*, esp. 137-222, 227-33.

[3] Louth (ed.) 2003, 112.

> Because the image of the emperor is called the emperor, yet there are not two emperors, for neither is the power divided nor the glory shared. For as the principle and authority that rules over us is one, so also is the praise that we offer one and not many, because the honour offered to the image passes to the archetype. What the image is by imitation here below, there the Son is by nature. And just as with works of art the likeness is in accordance with the form, so with the divine and incomposite nature the union is in the communion of the Godhead.[4]

This contains the passage that was to become an almost constant refrain in the iconodule defence of icons: "the honour offered to the image passes to the archetype". It might seem, however, that John's appeal to Basil is quite maladroit, for Basil is, in this passage, defending the veneration of the God the Son by arguing that worship offered the Son passes to the Father whose image he is (it is possibly the appeal to this passage that gave the iconoclasts the idea that consubstantiality belongs to the nature of the image). But what Basil appeals to – the veneration of the imperial image – was something familiar both to Basil's contemporaries and John's Byzantine contemporaries, and indeed something the Byzantine iconoclasts continued to practise, despite their rejection of the veneration of religious images. The principle behind imperial images and religious images is the same: so John remarks, "if the image of the emperor is the emperor, and the image of Christ is Christ, and the image of a saint is a saint, then the power is not divided nor the glory shared, but the glory of the image becomes that of the one depicted in the image" (*Imag.* I.36).

But if this passage seems to be, at least obliquely, relevant to John's case, it seems less clearly the case with the other quotations John provides from Basil. Take these three passages:

> Rise up now for me, O radiant painters of athletic achievements, and magnify the mutilated image of the general by your arts. The context in which he was crowned, described more dimly by me, you make radiant with the colours of your wisdom. Overwhelmed by you, I will refrain from describing the martyr's deeds of valour. Beaten by your strength, I rejoice today in such a victory. I see the struggle depicted most exactly by you, with his hand in the fire; I see the combatant, radiant with joy, depicted in your image. Let the demons howl, as they are now struck down by the valiant deeds of the martyrs now manifest in you. Let the burning hand be

[4] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 18.45.15-23 (ed. Pruche 1968: Basile de Césarée, *Sur le Saint-Esprit*, 406), cited in *Imag.* I.35 (and also II.31, III.48).

> once again shown as victorious over them. May Christ, the judge of the contest, inscribe them on his list, to whom be glory to the ages.[5]
>
> Let the people rejoice with spiritual joy at the simple remembrance of the deeds achieved by the just, urged to zeal and to imitation of the good people from whom they hear [these things]; for the story of men who conduct their lives well is a kind of light on the path of life to those who are being saved... Just as, when we relate the lives of those who are conspicuous in reverent life, we glorify first the master through the servants, and praise the just, whom we know through their witness, and make the people rejoice through hearing of the good.[6]
>
> For just as illumination automatically comes from fire and fragrance from myrrh, so also something profitable follows necessarily from good deeds. And it is no small thing accurately to grasp the truth of what is past, for the memory, that comes down to us and preserves the manly virtue of a man in his struggles, is dim. How then do those resemblances that are made amongst us by painters seem? For, since they copy images from images, they as often as not depart from the archetypes, and there is no small danger that we, if we turn away from the very sight of things themselves, will diminish the truth.[7]

The first of these passages – about the martyr Barlaam – remarks on the greater vividness the painter can achieve, compared with a speaker (or writer). In fact, however, what Basil is doing is using this idea as a way of rendering his own rhetorical performance more compelling; he is, in effect, bidding his audience to imagine for themselves what a painter can achieve, and in the light of that heighten in their understanding what Basil himself is achieving by his oratorical skill; indeed, he may be going further than that, and suggesting that his audience form a mental image on the basis of his words and be as moved by that as by the event depicted. What you see is, as it were, present and being re-enacted. He bids his audience recall that and focus on the victory then achieved, and now present: the victory of Christ over the demons through his martyr Barlaam. Whatever is going on in this passage, an appeal to visual art is being used as part of a rhetorical strategy. The other two passages – from a homily on the martyr Gordios – seem to be about the way in which memory re-enacts what it remembers, so that in thinking of the saints and their deeds, we call to mind their good deeds and are inspired by them, and praise both the saints themselves and

[5] Basil, *Homily on Barlaam the Martyr* (*PG* 31.489A4-B4), also cited at Nicæa II.

[6] Basil, *Homily on Gordios the Martyr* (*PG* 31.492A, 492B).

[7] Basil, *Homily on Gordios the Martyr* (493A).

God, through whose grace such deeds were performed. Basil, however, seems conscious of problems: memory only achieves this in so far as it is accurate, and the fact that the painter works, not directly from the events themselves, but from images (either verbal or visual) of them, means that they may not achieve what they set out to do. John's own comments are brief: the main point is that Basil asserts that memory is operative through words and images. The establishment of the value of memory is, however, important to John, for when he defines the kind of images that were at stake in the iconoclast controversy, he says that they are "images of what is past, the memory of either a certain miracle, or honour, or shame, or virtue, or vice, for the benefit of those who behold them later, so that they may flee what is evil and be zealous for what is good" (*Imag.* I.13). Such images, he says, are twofold, either "words written in books" or something "seen by the sense of sight": the scriptures, the *Lives* of the saints, and visual images of saints and their deeds are all images that operate through stirring up the memory. Basil's words in these passages from the homily on Saint Gordios might also be cited in support of what Anastos called "the ethical theory of images", the idea that saints inspire us to emulate them, not through pictures of them, but through the accounts of their lives. As so often, John seems to anticipate and undermine in advance the arguments of later iconoclasts.

A further passage John cites from Basil is purely rhetorical, and makes no reference at all to any actual image:

> Come together in our midst, as we set forth the excellent deeds of these men in a homily, drawing a lesson from them for the common benefit of those present, demonstrating them to all, as in a picture.[8]

With his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, the position is not much different. John cites this passage from *On the Creation of Human Kind*:

> Just as the custom is that those who fashion images of rulers, as well as expressing their features, express the imperial dignity by garments of purple, and it is customarily called both image and emperor, so too human nature, since it is fashioned to rule everything else, is set up as a kind of living image, participating in its archetype in both dignity and name.[9]

[8] Basil, *Homily on the 40 Martyrs of Sebaste* (*PG* 31.508CD).

[9] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Creation of Human Kind* 4 (*PG* 44.136C).

Here Gregory is concerned to explain what is entailed by human kind being created in the image of God, and uses the analogy of the imperial image, which is treated with the same honour as the emperor, because the honour offered to it is really honour offered to the emperor: the point made by Basil in the first passage we looked at. John also cites the famous description by Gregory of pictures portraying the binding of Isaac:

> First then the father binds his child. I have often seen images of this tender scene in pictures and I have not been able to pass from seeing it without tears, so skilfully does the artist bring this story to my sight. Isaac is before us, crouching on his knee before the altar, with his hands tied behind his back; [his father] has seized him from behind with his knee bended, and with his left hand grasping the child's hair he pulls him towards himself and bends over the face that looks up to him piteously, and with a sword in his right hand he proceeds directly to the sacrifice. The edge of the sword has already touched his body, and then there comes to him a voice from God forbidding the deed.[10]

This is an example of *ekphrasis*: the evocation of a picture in the words of the rhetor. As Jas Elsner has pointed out, ekphrasis "was not intended (as modern descriptions are) to go beside and to supplement the real painting or statue being described; it was intended to *replace* the sculpture or painting".[11] And so here, the evocation of a painting is part of a rhetorical technique: it appeals to the power of painting only to undermine it, to demonstrate implicitly the power of the spoken word.

Basil and Gregory were trained rhetors. The passages from their works to which John Damascene made appeal are about the place of mental images in a rhetorical culture; they are about the way in which the skilled rhetor in such a culture can conjure up visual images in the minds of his audience, as part of his way of moving them and conveying his message. They fit into John's argument in a rather oblique way, for what John is concerned to demonstrate is the necessity of actual visual images of Christ, the Mother of God and the saints – icons painted, woven, carved or inscribed. That is not the point made by the Cappadocian fathers at all; they are using images – evoked rather than "actual" (though are evoked images any less "actual" than actual images?) to lead the minds of their audience to experience the events described, as if they had been there in person.

[10] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Godhead of the Son and the Holy Spirit* (*PG* 46.572C), ed. Rhein in Rhein et alii (eds.) 1996: Gregorii Nysseni, *Sermones*, 3, 138-9; cited at Nicæa II.

[11] Elsner 1995: *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 24 (italics in original).

John Damascene also appeals to Dionysios the Areopagite, placing him first in his florilegia, presumably in the belief that Dionysios was the earliest of the fathers to whom he was making appeal. In the first florilegium, he cites three passages:

> It is necessary that, contrary to the crowd's prejudice against them, we should make the sacred journey into the sacred symbols and not dishonour these things that are the offspring and impressions of divine tokens and manifest images of ineffable visions beyond nature.[12]
>
> Into this have we been initiated: now analogously, through the divine veils of the scriptural and priestly traditions, [God's] love for human kind (*philanthropia*) covers intelligible things by that which can be perceived by the senses and things beyond being by the things that are, and provides forms and figures for what is formless and without figure, and makes manifold and gives form to simplicity that is beyond nature and shape in a multitude of separate symbols.[13]
>
> But the beings and orders that are above us, of which we have already made sacred mention, are bodiless, and their hierarchy is intelligible and transcends the cosmos. Let us see our hierarchy, in a way that bears analogy with us, made manifold by a multitude of symbols of things perceived by the senses, by which we ascend hierarchically, according to our measure, to the single-formed deification, to God and to divine virtue, those [beings] understanding, as intellects, in a way permitted to them, while we ascend by means of images perceived through the senses to the divine contemplations.[14]

What John derives from these passages, as his comments make clear, is that Dionysios regards symbols at the level of what can be perceived through the senses as a kind of stepping-stone, provided by God's own love for human kind, to the realm of the intelligible – the spiritual, immaterial world, beyond which lies the divine. In his comments, he explicitly mentions the memory, which is stirred up by these perceptible symbols and inspired to zeal. But there is an ambivalence about such an assessment of images: they are useful, perhaps indispensable, to begin with, but once one

[12] Dionysios the Areopagite, *ep.* 9.2, ed. Ritter in Heil & Ritter (eds.) 1991: *De coelesti hierarchia. De ecclesiastica hierarchia. De mystica theologia. Epistulae*, 199.

[13] Dionysius the Areopagite, *Divine Names* 1.4, ed. Suchla 1990: *De divinis nominibus*, 114.

[14] Dionysius the Areopagite, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 1.2, ed. Heil in Heil & Ritter (eds.) 1991, 65.

has accustomed oneself to the intelligible realm, they may have no further purpose. Dionysios himself sometimes gives such an impression.[15]

In the first florilegium, John cites nothing from Gregory of Nazianzus, which is surprising, as the Theologian is one of his favourite fathers, much cited, for instance, in *On the Orthodox Faith*, and alluded to several times in the treatises *On the Divine Images*, though, for the most part, these allusions do not bear directly on the arguments against the iconoclasts (John makes up for his neglect of Gregory in the second florilegium, where he cites five passages).[16] One phrase from Gregory, however, occurring in all three treatises, bears very directly on the argument: "the intellect, greatly tired, is quite incapable of passing beyond the bodily".[17] This remark (which echoes Plotinus, *Enneads* 6.9.3) is taken with great seriousness by John: the intellect tires because it is not meant to pass beyond the bodily. This recalls one of the striking features of John's whole theological work: his emphasis on the dual nature of the human, both spiritual and material, soul and body. This is integral to his presentation of Christian doctrine in *On the Orthodox Faith*, is the underlying theme in the transitional section of the third, most considered, treatise against the iconoclasts (*Imag.* III.11-13), and culminates in his remarkable assertion, later on in that treatise, that it is by virtue of our bodily nature that we can share in Christ's Body in the Eucharist, and thus participate in the divine nature in a way that surpasses anything that the bodiless powers, the angels, can know.[18] The passage just cited from Gregory the Theologian occurs just after John has referred to the essential role played by the imagination (*phantasia*) in the operation of the memory: "through the senses a certain imaginative image (*phantasia*) is constituted in the front part of the brain and thus conveyed to the faculty of discernment and stored in the memory" (*Imag.* I.11.14-19). It is relatively unusual for the Christian philosophical tradition to place a positive value on the imagination.[19] John does, and is followed in this

[15] E.g., *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 3.3.3 (ed. Heil 1991, 82-3).

[16] The additions in the second florilegium do not introduce any fresh ideas, so I have passed them over.

[17] *Imag.* I.11 = III.21, quoted in a slightly different form at II.5 = III.2. Neither version is precisely Gregory's: *Or.* 28.13 (ed. Gallay 1978: Grégoire de Nazianze, *Discours 27-31*, 128).

[18] See *Imag.* III.26.

[19] Cf. the explanation of "fantasy" given in the glossary to the English translation of the *Philokalia* (trans. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, Vol. I, London 1979, 359-60). The editors, influenced by a tradition (which may owe something to John Damascene) that values the imagination, have some difficulty in admitting that the hesychast tradition views the imagination in much more consistently negative terms.

nearly a century later by another of the great iconodule theologians, St Theodore the Studite, who in one of his letters remarks:

> To speak in a Dionysian manner (*Dionysiakôs eipein*), [it is by images that we] ascend to intellectual contemplations... Imagination is then one of the five faculties of the soul, and imagination itself seems to be a kind of image; for they are both manifestations. The image is not unprofitable, therefore, since it is a help to the imagination. If the image were unprofitable, then the imagination which depends on it and co-exists with it would be even more useless, and if it is useless, then so too would be the faculties that co-exist with it – the senses, opinion, understanding, the intellect.[20]

For the iconodules, John Damascene and Theodore the Studite, the defence of the imagination, as involved in our apprehension of icons, is part of an understanding of the way in which human kind is a unity of soul and body, the spiritual and the material, which is put at risk by a spiritualizing iconoclasm. In this defence, they draw on the ideas of earlier thinkers, but they draw these ideas into a context where they find a rather different resonance and meaning.

It is arguable that this changed intellectual context is to be related to the transition, remarked on by others, from the rhetorical culture, characteristic of the "Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature" (to use Johannes Quasten's phrase), in which the greatest of the Greek (and Latin) fathers were still able to draw on their experience of the highly developed rhetorical training of late antiquity, to a more visual culture, in which icons flourished, for which there is increasing evidence from the sixth century onwards. This transition could find support even from classical antiquity (it was a commonplace among Greek philosophers that sight was the most acute of the senses, and intellectual knowing was understood as a kind of spiritual sight[21]), and is manifest in the way in which the visual becomes indispensable in Byzantine culture. The ultimate impact of iconoclasm was only to produce a defence of religious imagery such as to render icons, and their veneration an essential, necessary part of Byzantine religious culture.[22] The importance the Cappadocians placed on mental images – and the way in which Dionysios saw the symbolic as providing a stepping stone from

[20] *Ep.* 380, lines 166-73, ed. Fatouros 1992: *Theodori Studitae Epistulae* II, 517; translation somewhat paraphrased in the interests of intelligibility).

[21] Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 250D; *Republic* vi.508B.

[22] See, e.g., Parry 1989: "Theodore Studites and the Patriarch Nicephoros on Image-Making as a Christian Imperative", *Byzantion* 59, 164-83.

the sensible to the intellectual – were used by iconodule theologians to support their much more thorough-going theology of visual imagery, which itself rested on a profound revaluation of the place of the bodily as an intended part of the created order, rather than something that would ultimately be transcended in a spiritual ascent to the realm of the intellectual and the divine.

15

Retrospect: Images, reflections and the "essential" Gregory

Philip Rousseau

It makes sense to begin this retrospect with Frederick Norris' contribution on the "contemplation of the beautiful", for it explores several issues that recur in the following chapters; and it seems useful to spell them out in ways that make clear their overarching relevance. We start with some ironic suspense, for Norris is anxious to have us acknowledge how traditional, how very much a man of his culture, Gregory was. Words, style, persuasive elegance mattered considerably (and would matter again, when it came to imagery). Soon, however, we meet our friends the Arians, Norris' point (indeed, Gregory's point) being that only Christian usage could give to traditional literary expression the power to translate knowledge of God from argument to worship, from a logical to a contemplative task. And the principal instrument of that shift was an awakening of the imagination. Here we have the crucial connection between aesthetics and cognition. "The task of theology", therefore, was "silent meditation expressed publicly through powerful images" – a splendid summary. Norris then returns to the Neo-Arians, who (in his view) provided the anvil upon which Gregory forged his personal paideia. Few others in the book explore that path – perhaps because the theological greatness of all the Cappadocians depended most on their ability to rise above narrow dispute. In all fairness, Norris himself proceeds to show how Gregory's method – the harnessing of imagery – contributed to an understanding not only of God but also of anyone else. Only the contemplative imagination could penetrate the cloak of human pain and sorrow, and see beyond them the possibility and achievement of *theôsis*. We are dealing here with a special aesthetic, a theologically informed pity – and we should not see it developing in Gregory's mind as an aspect or offshoot of *self*-pity: much else in the book is dedicated to the commendable thesis that Gregory was *not* a morbid failure.

That discussion of "human misery" is, for Norris, no blind alley: for a perceptive appreciation of the "divine mystery" depended upon the same techniques – indeed, the two forms of knowledge lay upon a single path-

way from human to divine understanding. And now, with a suitably purged assessment of cultural influence, we will recognize more happily, Norris hopes, that Gregory's imagery, even when applied to the Trinity, drew upon "authors he read during his hellenistic education". Yet, a further alchemy was at work: Gregory appealed to "the genuine illumination I had received from him [the Spirit], as I strike out a path through this world". Trusting in that inspiration, Gregory did not merely quote scripture but reappropriated it, "in ways that his instincts and education suggested". That bold and novel mimesis of older and carefully formed alliances between inspiration and text (not exclusively Christian) is highlighted even more vividly in John McGuckin's chapter.

Loyalty to tradition, therefore, especially in literary technique; knowledge of God and knowledge of other people; the awakening of the imagination, inspiring both sympathy and understanding; and a redefinition of paideia, particular to Gregory himself but lasting in its influence: those are, in my judgment, the central themes of Norris' contribution. They summarize precisely most of the concerns that the rest of this book explores.

*

The other chapters fall, I think, into two groups: those that tackle the issue of how human beings can know God and express that knowledge, and those that focus more on Gregory's knowledge and presentation of himself. We have, therefore, words and a speaker: Gregory's words and Gregory himself. The question – the question implied in my title – is whether the words provide us, as it were, with the speaker. There was, of course, only one Gregory, physically visible in Cappadocia; but – equally obvious – he is not visible to us. We do not even have a verbal report of his appearance, his voice, his gesture, from the pen of any reliable and disinterested observer. We have to decipher and interpret, in ways that reflect light back upon an historical individual, the desires, convictions and insights (not to mention conceits) dispersed through what Virginia Burrus calls "the actual diversity of compositional practice and the consequent plasticity and hybridity of literary forms".

Given the thrust of Norris' argument, it might seem natural to turn to Torstein Tollefsen's chapter, which has, after all, *theôsis* in its title. But I am drawn to look first at Samuel Rubenson's excursion into the Cappadocian exegesis of Acts 17.16-34, because it is focused on the churchmen's relation to the traditional culture. I would conclude more firmly than Rubenson

that our Gregory maintained, in his references to Acts, a desire to make that relation secure. It is striking, certainly, that so many of the passages quoted use the Areopagus debate *against* the cultural past. It would seem that in the later fourth century, especially in the light of Julian's reign, none of the Cappadocian trio would have valued opportunities to engage with pagans in the spirit of Paul (certainly not in so obstinately pagan a place as Athens), even though, as Rubenson says, "Paul's encounter with the Athenian philosophers seems … to have been a startling anticipation of what the Cappadocians were actually doing".

Basil happily ignored, therefore, any positive element in Luke's account. He saw the "worthless *scholê* of the Athenians" as just another example of the "curiosity and futile argumentation" that attracted his habitual disdain. Gregory of Nyssa was prepared to take pagan arguments more seriously, even though he refuted them with less tolerance than Paul. But our Gregory had no hesitation in defending the value of traditional culture on its own terms. He lamented (especially in Christian leaders) the absence of an erudition and finesse that pagans would have found familiar. By what other means could those leaders make their points "in the midst of sophists"? (Here is the very phrase evoked by Neil McLynn.)

In Tollefsen's contribution, therefore, we see Gregory putting language to new use. His treatment of *theôsis* in particular seems to have developed in the context of polemic against Arians. (We may recall Rubenson's allusion to Gregory of Nyssa's speech *De deitate filii et spiritus sancti*, in which he may have likened himself, faced with Arian ideas in Constantinople, to Paul faced with Stoics and Epicureans in Athens.) But Tollefsen's point is that our Gregory did not speak and write in his polished way only under pressure from Christian rivals. His understanding of *theôsis* was demanded by the inner logic of his own soteriology: only an orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and of the Incarnation would make sense of human salvation. The scrupulous urgency, we may add, of Tollefsen's inquiry is a good example of the contemporary theological concern recommended by Norris.

The question is, however, by what mechanisms were traditional notions *put to work* in a Christian context? That is what makes Jostein Børtnes' contribution pivotal in this group of chapters. He opens with Averil Cameron's assertion that "the passage of debate [from Christology] to the theory of the image was utterly predictable". John of Damascus would later be both succinct and derivative on the matter: "what the image is by imitation here below, there the Son is by nature". (Andrew Louth's chapter shows how rich a *Nachleben* among iconodules the Cappadocian argument

enjoyed.) With that as his starting point, Børtnes both examines the *notion* of image and struggles to discover how imagery *works*.

The heart of the matter is identified in the quotation from Oration 28: "using sight as a guide to what transcends sight without losing God through the grandeur of what they see". Later in the same oration, we learn that the "guidance" is provided by logos (and the ambiguity is not, of course, accidental). The site of this process is the human memory: for it is there that logos interacts with nous. Lodged within the memory, images are set free: they can be put to new or, perhaps better, fuller use, suggesting – indeed, "guiding" a person to identify – a cognitive path that leads away from (in the sense of beyond) their literal basis in human aesthetic experience. This cognitive utility of images (and here Børtnes quotes Mary Carruthers) follows from their providing "sites upon which and by means of which the human mind can build its compositions" – in this case, its understanding of God. (Note also how Børtnes insists that memories are shared: preacher and audience, for example, can draw, in this process, on a common set of resources.) Yet – and here is the final twist – one can forget as well as remember; and that regular occlusion of the imaginable is symptomatic of the extent to which imagery carries the mind only so far, without by itself being equivalent to a full understanding; certainly not of God.

In what are, perhaps, the two most tightly argued chapters in this group, Edgars Narkevics and Stratis Papaioannou illustrate the process, the mechanisms, with even greater refinement. For Narkevics, what matters most is the *way* in which Gregory argues. As with Tollefsen, "Gregory's conception of God is inseparable from the argumentative strategies by which it is formed". But, where Tollefsen found a theological demand, Narkevics defines the necessary inner drive of Gregory's discourse in purely logical terms. And that drive remains independent of the polemical circumstances, because, as he puts it, Gregory does not *respond* to Arian opponents so much as *imitates* their own ploys to their disadvantage. Eunomius' real-life thrusts are mimicked on a mock-up battlefield of Gregory's own making. After an exhaustive series of examples, Narkevics concludes that the "incoherence involved in their dialectical pretensions" – so, logic *was* at stake – "is demonstrated by the same tools that had been used in the formulation of their claims, namely, dialectical hypotheses".

The essential reprise of Jostein Børtnes' thesis – that knowledge of God has as its context the relation between image and reality – resides in Narkevics' belief (which is Gregory's belief) that if God is (for us) what we say about him, then we should only say about him what is compatible with what we know. Since our knowledge is limited, and since we cannot afford to circumscribe God within those limits (Gregory is persistent here), we are required to broaden the context of knowledge to include belief. Belief gives logos its fullness, its *plêrôsis* (*Or.* 29). In that sense, belief still operates logically, since the security of any statement depends on the speaker's confidence that language provides a reliable system by which one may describe and penetrate the meaning of experience. Børtnes' argument is thus confirmed (Narkevics is just as faithful to *Or.* 28): knowledge is secured when "our mind and reason (*nous te kai logos*) mingles with its kin, and the image ascends to the archetype it longs for"; but the limitation remains, for "whatevet we imagined or figured to ourselves or our reason delineated is not the existence of God" (*Or.* 6). What belief affords, of course, is not a sense of *what* God is, but rather the conviction *that* he is: "faithfulness *to* God", as Narkevics puts it, "supplies the overall purpose for our beliefs *about* the divine". But the clearest link with Børtnes' paper comes at the end of Narkevics' treatment, where he deals with the "skiagraphia" of his title. Those attempting knowledge of God, albeit limited, picture in shadowy form "what pertains to him" by assembling together "that which is [said] about him". The picturing is not a static exercise, but akin to watching a play: we parade (in words) the embodied shadows of the divine so that, as Gregory puts it, we may "contemplate in these, as on a stage, the objects of thought" (*Or.* 31). "Our noblest theologian", Gregory concludes, "is not one who has discovered the whole", but one who has "gathered in himself ... [a] shadow ... of the truth".

Stratis Papaioannou, in his chapter, makes analogous points, but refers to a different set of terms. He begins with what he calls a "discursive horizon", which represents the "constraint" of his title, "an ambiguous boundary simultaneously delimiting and inviting transgression". The analogy I detect resides in the image, *à la* Jostein Børtnes, which is at once circumscribed and capable of sustaining transcendence. However, Papaioannou's immediate concern is with "sameness": the overpowering desire of the classical tradition to safeguard continuity in, say, rhetorical style and the message that rhetoric proclaimed, and in individual experience and self-representation. Gregory could easily have been "constrained", therefore, in his use of traditional techniques and images. Yet, as we should by this time expect, he was able to acknowledge the constraint in the very act of rising above it; and the tool that lay to hand was not so much a shared pool of imagery as *enargeia*, a rhetor's ability to present things and persons

"*as if* they were real and alive" (italics mine). That was not merely a matter of mimesis, a paltry sleight of hand: enargeia imparted to the representation a transparency that enabled one to pass beyond it, to create a bridge between the aesthetic and the cognitive. So, as Papaioannou puts it, we have instances of *disclosure* rather than *enclosure*, which allow the mobility that we detected in Edgars Narkevics' "skiagraphia", whereby the representation is embedded in a dramatic script, as in a play. The extended process does not reside in there being antecedents to the rhetorical declaration, then the declaration itself, then its remembered effect: rather, as the listener and knower moves through time, the transparency of what is said (or written) remains unendingly available. (Tomas Hägg alludes to this as "a perpetuation of memory" – in Gregory's words, "a *mnêmosunon* ... left for posterity" (*Or.* 18.39).)

Papaioannou ends his argument by showing how the dynamic alchemy of enargeia could be realized in a speaker as much as in what was spoken. There were subjective difficulties to be overcome, "ruptures" to be healed, which could be ranged under the heading *pathos*. Perhaps we can equate the associated sense of impasse with the "forgetting" described by Jostein Børtnes. Aware that the vividness of experience could threaten its capacity to facilitate transcendent understanding, Gregory attempted (in a very traditional way) to suspend experience by (almost) "shutting the senses" (*Or.* 2). What saved him from being trapped by such a withdrawal was the notion of "becoming", which (again) set the self itself in motion, so that experience became intensified rather than annulled. The redemption of enargeia, therefore, was achieved by another enargeia, the translucence of the self; and the desiring self (desiring transcendent understanding) was thus engaged in a movement that prevented it from confusing desire itself with the object of desire. That was why awareness of the dynamic self lay at the heart of Gregory's self-presentation.

In these contributions, therefore, we have detailed accounts of how Gregory (as Frederick Norris suggests) drew upon his cultural past in order to transform it; how he shifted from a logic and anthropology of predictability to a logic and anthropology of possibility. What had become possible? Something more than "skiagraphia" and "constraint": transcendent understanding, a penetrability in the world of experience, a growth of the self, even as it was discerned as other than oneself, and above all *theôsis*. In those qualities and emphases, we discover a man who respected his past, who was happy to find it in many ways inescapable; but a man also who saw beyond the received wisdom of description and demonstration, in

order to describe and confirm more than the past had been able to imagine.

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Stratis Papaioannou's chapter leads naturally to the second group, since he is concerned from the outset with Gregory's "self-representation", the persona that he projects of himself; and he wishes to relate that discursive register to Gregory's "aesthetics of discourse" and "aesthetics of existence". Tomas Hägg provides an admirable introduction to this second issue by showing us how Gregory constructed and set in motion what we might call "family rhetoric" (including an abundance of oblique self-reference). "Structure" is only one element among several: Hägg describes how Gregory "controls and manipulates the conventions", and how he used "narrative technique", "dramatic incident", and "characterization". Gregory the rhetor pushed expectations to the limit. He mixed "old pagan forms" and "more specifically Christian topoi", and disregarded what he himself, nevertheless, called "the rules of the genre" (*Or.* 7). If that was "play", then it was of a serious sort – subversive, calculated, and fresh in its effect. But, as Frederick Norris would (I am sure) agree, play can only be seen as such when expectations are acknowledged. The question is, in what interests did Gregory, as Stratis Papaioannou puts it, overstep boundaries and challenge constraint?

Virginia Burrus and Susanna Elm answer that question in their particular ways. To Burrus, the apparent Christian subversion of traditional forms and traditional habits of mind has seemed all too often either a failure or a deceit. She does not tax Gregory in those terms here. True, we come close again to that perennial problem in the gender history of the period: accounts of women written by men. However, Gregory gets off lightly in Burrus' essay: he is not only a transgressor but also an innovator. Burrus begins splendidly by dwelling on the affront embedded in Gregory's praise of Gorgonia. The funeral oration, traditionally, was an exercise in shared masculinity. The essential qualities of "made men" (rhetors all) were extended beyond death: those who survived and those who passed away remained members of a single social unit, at once created and sustained by oratory. Yet here Gregory extends the same compliment (apparently) to his sister; and Burrus entertains the further question of whether that *was* a mere "transgression". To suppose that Gregory had daringly subverted the "expectations" (to use Tomas Hägg's term) of a hard and fast genre is to attribute, she suggests, too much rigidity to rhetorical practice. The ability of a rhetor to escape "constraint" (again, with Hägg, to "play") depended in

part on the extent to which genres defined themselves as they went along. (Burrus herself explicitly makes the distinction between "the mimetic reproduction of sameness" and "the dialogical play of difference".)

Where, then, did Gregory's innovation lay? With clear vision and courageous speed, he spotted the necessary gap in the dangerous reefs of convention, and sailed his rhetorical ship out into new and broader waters. He could do so because Christianity had its extra handle on death, namely martyrdom. Gorgonia displayed no particular ascetic virtue, no admirable renunciation of marriage; but her death could be exalted as a sacrifice. Here, I think, the biographical element resides not so much in her having, as Burrus puts it, "a life after death" as in her having a life *in* death. The collegiality of the living and the dead is less marked than with men – or, rather, differently exploited. Gorgonia's death remains at the level of imagery: there was still work to be done if one were to achieve, in Jostein Børtnes' terms, transparency. The dead Gorgonia's polis was remote, postponed; *patria* counted for more than *patris,* the backward reference of lineage more than the anticipation of a heavenly home. The logos epitaphios, in this case, remained enfolded (as Burrus points out) in the aesthetic realm, the realm of pathos – not least because (as she also says) it was "veiled as a written text". Listeners had to remain content with a light reflected back upon the living – which may be what Gregory meant, or certainly hinted at, by his assertion that "in praising my sister, I shall be honouring my own family".

There was also something sacramental in the enterprise: the appeal to an opaque symbol that nevertheless imparted what it promised. That is scarcely surprising, given that martyrdom consisted in part in a representation of Jesus' sacrificial death. Martyrdom was a public, almost liturgical, act. It attempted to make available to spectators an experience that was by its nature lonely and intimate. No onlooker could be sure that the martyrs actually experienced the victory their actions symbolized. Transcendent knowledge required, here as elsewhere, an act of faith. How arresting, therefore, that Burrus should discuss the issue of publicity. If the logos epitaphios in its masculine guise made the dead enduringly participators in their traditional polity, what can we gather from the publicity allowed here to the woman Gorgonia? Martyrdom provides exactly the key. To describe Gregory's oration as "a rhetorical act that makes public what is properly private" is to set it alongside the *passiones* of the martyrs, which were also textually veiled invitations to penetrate the hidden (the "properly private") intimacy of self-sacrifice.

Amidst several other exciting *aperçus,* therefore, Burrus unerringly recalls much that we see suggested by Jostein Børtnes, Edgars Narkevics and Stratis Papaioannou. Not only does she discuss the bald fact that Gregory used old literary forms to make new points, but she also demonstrates *how* he did so: what species of imagination was demanded of both orator and audience, and how the heritage of Christianity provided the tools that changed transgression into innovation. Susanna Elm offers us a natural sequel, since she opens with a quotation from Burrus herself, about "cutting manhood loose from its traditional fleshly and familial moorings", so that (in her own words) Gregory could conceive of himself "as both father and mother to his congregation". Burrus explores the implications of that liberty as it operates in the oration on Gorgonia: "the author (to the extent that he laments as well as praises) is at least partly feminized and the subject (to the extent that she is made the object of public praise as well as lamentation) partly masculinized". Here is a perfect example of the alchemy described by Stratis Papaioannou, whereby escape from constraint was made possible not by ignoring traditional elements but by realigning their proportional relations – in Burrus' case, the relation of praise to lamentation.

Elm makes additional points. The newly feminized man is not, in her case, created by the skilful juggling of rhetorical devices, but by redefining the character of the teacher, the philosopher with disciples gathered about him. If Gregory was "both father and mother", then his masculinity had to be played out in a familial as well as an oratorical theatre. To "perform" fatherhood (and here Elm quotes Megan McLaughlin), "one must be joined on the stage by someone enacting the role of the child". One needed also – and here the familial emphasis acquires fuller resonance – to create for oneself a new ancestry; what Elm later describes as a divinely inspired *eugeneia.* (She shows skilfully how the pagan Julian achieved that; Ausonius might provide another example in the west.) The philosophical aspect of the matter reveals, therefore, what had been carried over from tradition, not least a philosopher's dependence on a valid *diadochê:* for Christianity did not invent the role that Gregory adopted. Again, one needed an old platform on which to make one's new point, even as one redesigned the platform in the process. But the outcome of Gregory's endeavour was undoubtedly Christian: "in writing his own family as a philosophical one Gregory, while creating models for new Christians as well as a new literary genre ..., also created a new masculinity and femininity for himself".

Elm is not content, therefore, to see Gregory merely as "a composite of

several historiographic personalities": there is for her a "dominant persona, overshadowing all others", which she describes as "Gregory the Christian". (Compare that with Stephanos Efthymiadis' account of how later Byzantines were equally anxious to resolve "a multifaceted identity" into a single figure – in their case, the figure of "Gregory the Theologian".) By "Christian", Elm means a man preoccupied with "the nature of the 'true' philosophical life", which related to "the correct and appropriate mixture of retreat and involvement" – the traditional distinction between *bios theôrêtikos* and *bios praktikos*. That, for her, makes more sense than presenting an actual diptych, with Gregory the "fluent" theologian on one side and "a sensitive soul … indecisive or pusillanimous" on the other. Gregory was a pioneer in attempting a synthesis of traditional aspirations and responsibilities within himself: a Christianized synthesis because it was attempted on the threshold between familial and pastoral experience.

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John McGuckin's contribution offers a natural counterweight to Frederick Norris' chapter. Indeed, he effects an explicit reprise of Norris' theme, when he describes how "the ascent to beauty as approached by hellenistic paideia, was a matter of 'ornate words'", whereas Christians "apprehended [beauty] in contemplation", which marked them out as "truly wise" in their use of language. However, the reciprocity between McGuckin's chapter and Neil McLynn's is too good to pass over: so, I shall conclude by discussing them together.

McGuckin, focusing on Gregory's poems, sounds a warning against the persistent threat that almost every contributor acknowledges: "the artifice here does not so much reveal the persona of Gregory more directly, as serve to cover it with yet more texture". We do not enjoy "a direct revelation of the inner life". Of course, we do not have to suppose that the "essential" Gregory *was* an "inner" Gregory: persona immediately and properly suggests performance. The problem is, rather, that we have the script of a performance we can never attend. Frankly, that puts Byzantine receivers in just as much a bind as it does ourselves.

The increasing density of texture allows McGuckin, however, to make his central point: Gregory the poet can be fully understood only when placed in an ancient, pre-Christian context. That context was formed in part by a debate about the appropriate relationship between poetry and philosophy. Given, for example, Susanna Elm's firm and convincing

attachment to a philosophic Gregory, we are not surprised to learn that he veered away from the sharp distinctions imposed by Plato, which had been based largely on the prejudice that, if poetry was inspired, it must be irrational and therefore misleading as a component of paideia. What McGuckin also shows, however, is that Gregory did not merely adopt a contrasting Aristotelian view. He *wanted* to think of his poetry as inspired; and that was because he was equally prepared to see moral didacticism as the fruit of inspiration. The "inspired visionary" was characterized best by moderation ("measured" like the metre of a poem); and it was moderation in that sense that became "[Gregory's] own chief qualification as poet, priest, and philosopher", "the source of a definitive [and new, Christian] paideia". "He presents himself as the resolution of the old schism between the philosopher and the mantic poet".

McGuckin turns at this point to the problem of editing: how much does the current structure of the corpus reflect Gregory's intentions in his own lifetime? Rather little, McGuckin concludes (and brushes up once more against the problems of *Nachleben* and *Rezeption*). What we can be sure of is that Gregory was calculating in his constructions, responding to particular audiences and challenges, especially in the years after his withdrawal from Constantinople. The *carmen* "On matters of measure" seems to McGuckin to be "a preludium designed to stand at the head of an edition of Collected Poems", although bearing little resemblance to what we now think of under that heading.

But then comes "one of those great leaps [Gregory] sometimes makes" (not, I think, "in all innocence"): the source of his inspiration, his *apologia* reveals, is the same Spirit that inspired the scriptures. McGuckin marvels at "the magnitude of the claim, so quietly presented"; but we should have expected such a strategy – the harnessing of a Christian resource (the fact of scripture's inspiration) to aid the passage of an old convention (the inspiration of the poet) into a Christian milieu. The convention is at once recognized (indeed, valued) and transcended. So, Gregory's "announcement of a new program of Christian paideia" was an enterprise *parallel to* the formation of scripture. Inspired scripture was not simply an authoritative antecedent (upon which to draw for imagery, for example) but the paradigm that justified Gregory's new production of an old performance, his revised adoption of an old self-presentation.

Neil McLynn wishes "to establish a social setting" for that passage of habits and ideas from culture to culture. And he proceeds to do so in a richly delineated prosopography, showing that Gregory was incorporated

into a longstanding network of sophists in the broadest sense. Cappadocia is revealed as truly a theatre of ambiguity: respectful and protective of deep roots; eager for inventive experiment. McLynn also shows *where* the shift from a pagan to a Christian milieu took place: "traditional symposia, open houses for those who shared his philosophical ideals". Here is another example – a social rather than a literary example – of how a component of the old paideia, the symposium, could become the site of Christian discourse. I found particularly arresting the way in which the symposium, in that Christian guise, could also be seen as the site of a specifically *ascetic* discourse. As McLynn puts it, "the deeper the local roots we allow for the ascetic movement, the more diversified the influences operative will become". One has to connect this with Susanna Elm's reflections on Gregory the philosopher and teacher. It must also affect our understanding of the ascetic Basil.

McLynn then links the new paideia with Gregory the poet – highlighting the relation between his own paper and John McGuckin's. Two axes of transformation are thus defined: the one "bridging the gap between [Gregory's] ascetic circle and the local schools", which enables the "friends of God" to "monitor the young"; and the one that offers his poetry "a more constructive role … within the traditional educational system", "leading the young towards communion with God by this pleasurable means".

When we take these two chapters together, McGuckin's seems less disembodied and McLynn's less positivistic – not that either could be crudely so described in their independent guises. The conjunction of the two analyses allows a highly literary Gregory to operate within a social context that any pagan would find familiar; a context that not only lay ready to hand but was also as ready as his poetry to foster new purposes.

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So, can we identify an "essential" Gregory, a personality neither simply contrived by the subject himself nor simply ascribed to him by others? I suppose that is a question we might ask about anybody, ourselves included. The nature and accessibility of the self is, surely, one of the imponderables of late Roman studies. The question does provide us, nevertheless, with a social map upon which to trace pathways between person and person. We can assess how direct those pathways were and improve our understanding of them, as we observe in the past and experience again in our own time

the natural desire to discover (that is, to disclose) other people (while hiding, perhaps, oneself).

But the debate reaches further than that. It is not simply a matter of wondering whether we have access to a "real" Gregory. The very acts – literary acts above all – by which Gregory "presented" himself *were* the stratagems whereby he achieved the transition from an old to a new culture. The "essential" Gregory *was* the catalyst that, working within an existing medium, created a new substance. To have "become Gregory", to be Gregory the "made man", was to have become a figure (a suggestive image) still recognizably typical but enlivened by a new mobility – a nomad, an explorer; but one whose field of discovery was the homeland he never left. So, whatever we make of Gregory we have to make of him in a classical world; but, as Virginia Burrus states in reference to manhood, he cut that world loose from its traditional moorings.

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Budé	=	Collection des universités de France publiée sous le patronage de l'Association Guillaume Budé, Les Belles Lettres: Paris.
CCG	=	Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca, Brepols: Turnhout.
CCL	=	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina, Brepols: Turnhout.
CFHB	=	Corpus Fontium Hisroriae Byzantinae, Berlin & New York or Thessalonica.
CPG	=	M. Geerard (ed.), *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, Vol. I-VI, Brepols: Turnhout 1974-1998.
FC	=	Fontes Christiani, Herder: Freiburg.
GCS	=	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, Akademie-Verlag: Berlin.
GNO	=	W. Jaeger et al. (eds.), Gregorii Nysseni *Opera*, Vol. I-, E.J. Brill: Leiden 1952-.
Lampe	=	G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Clarendon Press: Oxford 1961.
LCL	=	Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA & London.
LSJ	=	Liddel-Scott-Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., Clarendon Press: Oxford 1940.
NPNF	=	A Select Library of the Christian Church, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.
PG	=	J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, Paris.
PL	=	J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, Paris.
PLRE I	=	A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale & J. Morris, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, Vol. I: A.D. 260-395, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1971.
SC	=	Sources Chrétiennes, Vol. 1-, Cerf: Paris.
Teubner	=	Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana.

Other abbreviations

Carm.	=	*Carmen, -mina*
Comm.	=	*Commentarii*
Ep.	=	*Epistula(e)*
Or.	=	*Oratio(nes)*

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